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THE EAST I KNOW

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THE EAST I KNOW

By PAUL CLAUDEL: *Translated by* TERESA FRANCES *and* WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

"Look East, where whole new thousands are!"

BROWNING

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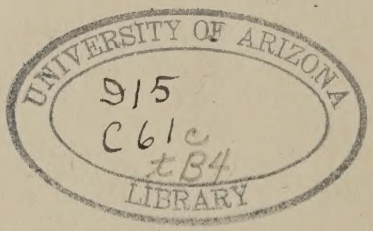
Yale University Press:

. . . I should be most happy and honored if my works could be brought to the attention of the American public under the shelter and patronage of the illustrious University of which you are a part.

Paul Claudel

March 28, 1914



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PAUL CLAUDEL

BY PIERRE CHAVANNES

Reprinted from "The New Statesman," London, by the courtesy of the Editor

CLAUDEL worked for more than twenty years in silence in an almost complete obscurity. Nobody ever mentioned him save a few very independent artists — Mirbeau, Barrès, Schwob, Gide, Jammes, Mauclair — who talked about him amongst themselves and sometimes even dared to speak about him in public, without awakening an echo.

Moreover, Claudel was usually far from France, Consul in various towns of the Far East; he published his earlier works anonymously, lest their Catholic character should damage his career, and for a long time his work was only to be seen in the small literary reviews and in special editions, of which a very small number of copies were printed; and he never attempted to advertise himself. But in time he was saddened by this great solitude. "One grows tired," he wrote, "of speaking, as it were, in impenetrable cotton-wool."

These latter days Claudel's glory, which had so long been obscured, has suddenly blazed forth, if not to the great public, at least to the public which reads and is interested in literature. The Théâtre de l'Œuvre has played one of his dramas — L'Annonce faite à Marie; *the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier is about to play another* — L'Échange. *The ordinary newspaper critics have begun talking about Claudel; gen-*

erally speaking, they refer to him with admiration, often with astonishment and that kind of reserve which marks men who are not sure that they understand, and, fearing that they are deceiving themselves, do not wish completely to commit themselves. But in many young reviews admiration is carried to a pitch of enthusiasm and almost of worship; and to-day writers who are by no means young rank Claudel with the small company of the very great: Æschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe.

Reading Claudel, one can understand this long silence, this admiration, and also this reserve. Claudel is not an easy poet: when one penetrates his work one is transported as though into a foreign country. He has a speech peculiar to himself; he has invented a form which is neither prose, nor regular verse, nor ordinary vers libre; *his work, created by a solitary man, is not bound up with our troubles and our daily life; to love Claudel one must be initiated.*

He is a poet, in itself a thing rare in our time; but he is also, and some would say primarily, a thinker. He has brought his dramatic work together under the general title of L'Arbre, *just as Balzac assembled his immense work under the title of* La Comédie Humaine. *By this title Claudel wants to indicate that his work has the sort of natural profound living unity of the tree, which thrusts its roots deep into the nourishing earth, and draws from it the sap which rises in the branches to feed the remotest sunlit boughs. Each of his dramas also is a drama of thought; they raise the greatest problems and often suggest solutions. Tête d'Or is the chief, the commander of men, the conqueror, who is driven to great deeds by an immense desire — as it were, a*

predestination. The weak, whom Cébès symbolizes, the people, give themselves to him; he carries them in his train until the day when, undertaking an enterprise beyond mortal strength, he loses his power and dies a new Prometheus on a high mountain. La Ville *presents contemporary society and the struggles that rend it, and the great attitudes of the spirit confronting life: Isidore de Besme, the engineer, the savant, is the realist, who has a knowledge of natural forces and uses them to satisfy the needs of men. He dominates the town, but he is unaware of the mystic quality of things; he wrongly estimates the soul, and his science leads only to death. Lambert is the man who seeks the end of life in the play of ideas and the love of woman. Œuvre, finally, is the poet who enters the inmost shrine of truth by intuition and love, but is condemned to solitude by that knowledge.* Le Repos du Septième Jour *is an ideologic drama: a Chinese Emperor goes down into hell, and the roots of the moral world are laid bare in a Dantesque vision, a kind of summary of good and evil.* L'Échange *and* La Jeune Fille Violaine *are dramas of sentiment. In* L'Échange *four characters are set against the brutal, realistic, material background of America. There is Louis Laine, an adventurous, but feeble, person who had stifled in the too rigid enclosure of the old European society; there is his wife, the gentle Marthe, the wife faithful through everything, who keeps close in her heart the traditional virtues of the old Christian world; there is Lechy, the violent woman who is the incarnation of disorder, and spreads it around her and death with it; and there is Sir Pollock, the man of affairs, who only lives for gold, convinced that anything can be bought*

with it, and demands Louis Laine's wife from him for a fistful of money. La Jeune Fille Violaine *is the sublime poem of a holy soul which enriches itself by stripping itself, and arrives through suffering and renunciation to peace and the joy of an angelic death. In* L'Otage, *we have the eternal story of a conflict between that which remains and that which passes.*

It is impossible in a brief space to analyze dramas so laden with ideas, but one can indicate the size and the unity of the work. The tree that Claudel wants to show us is the tree of life. The roots are in Le Repos du Septième Jour; *the sap, the desire, in* Tête d'Or; *the double-branching — the ideas of the mind in* La Ville, *and sentiment in* L'Échange, La Jeune Fille Violaine, *and* L'Otage. *Claudel himself has formulated the theory and doctrine of his art in three treatises brought together in his* Art Poetique.

It might be imagined that Claudel was a mere man of books, a thinker in the abstract. He is nothing of the sort. This thinker is at the same time the most concrete of poets. His thought is, as it were, swollen with essential sap. And he expresses it in a flow of images taken directly from things and exhibiting them in their reality. Claudel's originality lies in this double aspect: the unique blend of the highest intellectuality with the richest realism. The man who meditates over the greatest problems and expounds a profound logical doctrine to justify his work is at the same time a primitive who works with his fresh and eager eyes fixed on Nature. His dramas never lose touch with the earth where men live, love, and suffer. His characters are greater than Nature, and they express themselves quite naturally with a biblical amplitude; but they never ring false

and they often move us deeply. For they are powerfully real types which exist and which one often remembers. These two elements do not always mingle in a perfect harmony; Claudel's art is powerful, but it is not easy: it is like the obscure and painful work of germination. His admirers themselves say that Claudel's works are like symphonies that one must hear several times before grasping their meaning and their beauties, and that his plays are beyond the capacity of the present-day public.

Claudel is, finally, one must admit, a great religious poet, and it is in that fact that the deepest unity of his work must be sought. His work, it has been said, is a long pilgrimage towards God; and the road has not been without its grievous strugglings, since the day when in his youth he was suddenly converted and flung himself towards God, but without winning light for his reason. "O my God," he cries years after:

I remember the darkness where we two were face to face, those gloomy winter afternoons in Notre-Dame.

I, all alone below there, lit up the face of the great bronze Christ with a twopenny-halfpenny taper.

All men were then against us, science and reason; and I replied nothing.

Only the faith was in me, and I looked at You in silence like a man who prefers his friend.

I went down into Your sepulcher with You.

Claudel's whole life has been a struggle for the faith, for he is one of those men for whom there is no life save in God, and who see nothing outside faith in Him save despair, death, and annihilation. A somber sadness burdens those first dramas which tell of man's great struggle to dispense with God and his check; but this gives way to joy in proportion as Claudel's faith

strengthens and grow bright. That pilgrimage towards God is also a pilgrimage towards joy; and that joy breaks into great song, now austere, now delirious, in Claudel's properly lyrical work — the Hymnes *and the* Cinq Grandes Odes. *Here one hears only the most distant echoes of the great struggle; here are only cries of joy and certitude.*

Blessed be Thou, my God, Who hast delivered me from death. . . .
. . . He who believes not in God, believes not in Being, and he Who hates being, hates his own existence.
Lord, I have found Thee.
Who finds Thee has no more tolerance of death.

A strange phenomenon, this Christian poet, passionately, uncompromisingly, almost fanatically Catholic, in the country where Anatole France, the bantering and disillusioned master, holds sway, where Renan and Voltaire reigned, and with them hard reason, distrustful of the supernatural.

France, as Kipling has justly said, is the country most faithful to old things and most wildly enthusiastic about new ones. The present fashion for Roman Catholicism counts for something in Claudel's sudden vogue, just as Claudel has done something to bring about the fashion. Various writers, tired of wandering far from safe harbors, have "been converted" by Claudel's appeal; and the young men who reproached France for withering life up, and for lacking the "sense of the divine," have found in Claudel one of their masters. It is the perpetual oscillation of the human spirit from pure reason to exalted sentiment. Claudel stands head and shoulders above the little crowd which surrounds him, and he will outlast them and their ways of thought. Most of us must say to him, in the words of

one of his own characters, "I cannot give you my soul." But we love the poet in him and admire the passionate believer who compels us to question ourselves in the inner silence, the man who made for himself this prayer:

Make me as one who sows solitude, and may be who bears my speech
Return home troubled and heavy.

1895 — 1900

THE EAST I KNOW

THE COCOA PALM

OUR trees stand upright like men, but motionless; thrusting their roots deep in earth, they flourish with outstretched arms. But here the sacred banyan does not rise as a single stem; for the pendent threads, through which it returns seeking the fruitful soil, make it seem a marvelous temple self-created.

Observe only the cocoa palm. It has no branches. At the apex of the trunk it raises a tuft of fronds.

Palm! The insignia of triumph. Aerial in the light, consummate bloom of the crest, it soars, expands, rejoices, — and sinks beneath the weight of its freedom.

Through the warm day and the long noon the cocoa palm expands. In an ecstasy it spreads its happy leaves. Like infant heads the cocoanuts appear, the great green fruit of the tree.

Thus does the cocoa palm gesture, revealing its heart; for the lower leaves, unfolding from out their depth, reach

pendulent to the earth; and the leaves in the midst spread far on every side; and the leaves above, uplifted like the hands of an awkward man or like one who signals his complete submission, slowly wave and sign.

The trunk is nowhere rigid, but ringed; and like to the blades of the grass, it is supple and long. It is swayed by the moods of the earth, whether it strains toward the sun or bends its spreading plumes over swift and turbid rivers, or between the sea and the sky.

One night, returning along the shore of the sea assaulted with turbulent foam by the whole deep-thundering weight of the leonine Indian Ocean beneath the south-western monsoon, — as I followed the shore far-strewn with palms like the skeleton wrecks of boats and of lesser and living things, I saw them upon my left! As I walked by that forest empty beneath its dense-woven ceiling, the palms seemed enormous spiders crawling obliquely across the peaceful twilight heaven!

Venus, like a moon drowned in divinest light, flickered a wide reflection in the waters. And a palm-tree bent over the sea and the mirrored planet, and its gesture offered its heart to the heavenly fire.

I shall often remember that night when, afar, I yearn to return! I saw the leafage hanging in heavy tresses, and across the high fane of the forest, that sky where the storm, setting its feet on the sea, loomed up like a mountain; and how low on the dark horizon the pale pearl of the ocean gleamed!

Oh Ceylon, shall I ever forget thee, — thy fruits and thy flowers, and thy people with melting eyes, naked beside those highways that are hued like the mango's flesh; and my rickshaw-man's gift of nodding rosy flowers which he placed on my knees when, with tears in my eyes, crushed down by sorrow — but nibbling a leaf of cinnamon — I left thee at last beneath thy rainy skies.

THE PAGODA

I DESCEND from my carriage, and the sight of a hideous beggar marks the beginning of my journey. With one blood-shot eye he leers at me, and with a leprous lip reveals to their roots teeth bone-yellow and as long as those of a rabbit. The rest of his face is eaten away.

Rows of other wretches are ranged on both sides of the highway, which is thronged at this outlet of the city with pedestrians, messengers, and wheelbarrows bearing women and their bundles. The oldest and grossest of the men is called the King of the Beggars. They say that, crazed by the death of his mother, he carries her head about with him concealed in his clothes. The last that I notice, two very old women, wrapped in swathings of rags, their faces black from the dust of the roads where they prostrate themselves at times, sing one of those plaints broken with long sighs and hiccoughs, which are the professional expressions of despair among these outcasts. I can see the pagoda afar off between thickets of bamboo; and, crossing the fields, I take a short cut toward it.

The country is a vast cemetery. Everywhere there are coffins; on hillocks covered with withered reeds, and in the dry grass, are rows of little stone posts, mitered statues, or lions of stone, marking the ancient sepulchers. Individual wealth or burial associations have built these tombs surrounded by trees and hedges. I pass between a place for animals and a pit filled with the skeletons of little girls whose parents wished to be rid of them. They have choked it to the mouth. It will soon be necessary to dig another.

The day is warm, the sky clear, I walk in the light of December.

The dogs see me, bark, and run away; I reach and pass the villages with their black roofs; I cross the fields of cotton and beans; I cross the rivulets by the old worn bridges, and, leaving on my right the great empty buildings of a deserted powder-mill, I arrive at my goal. I hear a noise of bells and a drum.

Before me is a tower of seven stories. An Indian with a golden turban, and a Parsee wearing a plum-colored one twisted like a stovepipe, are entering it. Two other figures move about on the highest balcony.

I must speak first of the pagoda itself.

It is composed of three courts and three temples, flanked by accessory chapels and lesser buildings. Religion here does not, as in Europe, barricade and segregate in loneliness the mystery of a faith walled about by dogma. Its function is not to defend the absolute against exterior aspects. It establishes a certain atmosphere; and, as though suspended from heaven, the structure gathers all nature into the offering that it constitutes. Multifold, all upon one level, it expresses Space by the relations of height and distance between the three arches of triumph or the temples which are consecrated to them; and Buddha, Prince of Peace, inhabits it with all the gods.

Chinese architecture, as it were, suppresses the walls. It amplifies and multiplies the roofs; and their exaggerated corners, lifting themselves with an exquisite resilience, return toward the sky in flowing curves. They remain suspended in air! The wider and heavier the fabric of the roof, the more, by that very weight, does it give an impression of lightness through every deep shadow projected below. Hence the use of black tiles, that form deep grooves and strong copings with high openings between them, makes the highest ridges

detached and distinct. Clear though intricate of outline, their frieze is lifted through the lucid air. The temple is seen as a portico, a canopy, or a tent, of which the uplifted corners are attached to the clouds; and in its shade are installed the idols of the earth.

A fat, gilded fellow lives under the first portico. His right foot, drawn beneath him, indicates the third attitude of meditation, where consciousness still exists. His eyes are closed, but under his golden skin can be seen the red lips of a distended mouth whose long rounded opening stretches at the corners into the shape of an eight. He laughs, and the laugh is that of a face asleep. At what does this obese ascetic laugh? What does he see with those closed eyes?

On each side of the hall, two at the right and two at the left, the four painted and varnished colossi, with short legs and enormous torsos, are the demons who guard the four shores of Heaven. Beardless as children, one brandishes serpents, one plays the viol, and one shakes a cylindrical engine like a closed parasol or a firecracker.

I penetrate into the second court. A great brass incense-burner covered with inscriptions is in the middle. I stand be-

fore the principal pavilion. On the ridges of the roof little painted groups of figures seem as though they were passing from one side to the other, or ascending while engaged in conversation. At the angles of the coping hang two pink fish, their long feelers curving tremulously, their tails in the air; in the center two dragons are fighting for the mystic jewel. I hear songs and the beating of bells, and through the open door I see the evolutions of the bonzes.

The hall is high and spacious. Four or five colossal gilded statues dominate the background. The largest is seated on a throne in the middle. His eyes and mouth are closed, his feet drawn under him, and one hand, held in the "gesture of witness," points to the earth. Thus, under the sacred tree, the perfect Buddha conceived himself. Escaped from the wheel of life, he participates in his own Nirvana. Others perched above him, with downcast eyes, contemplate their navels. These are the Heavenly Buddhas seated on lotus flowers. They are Avalokhita, Amitabha, the Buddha of the Light without Measure and the Buddha of the Paradise of the West. At their feet the bonzes pursue their rites. They have gray robes; large, somewhat rust-colored mantles attached to the

shoulder like togas; leggings of white linen; and, some of them, a sort of mortar-board on their heads. Others bare their scalps, where the white marks of *moxas* show the number of their vows. One by one, murmuring, they file past. The last who passes is a boy of twelve years. By a side hall I reach the third court and see a third temple.

Four priests perched on stools are ranged inside the door. Their shoes are left on the earth before them; and without the need of feet, detached, imponderable, they are seated on their own thoughts. They make no movement. Their mouths, their closed eyes, are one with the creases and wrinkles in the wasted flesh of their faces, like the scar of the navel. Consciousness of their inertia is sufficient for their ruminating intelligence. Under a niche in the middle of the hall, I distinguish the shining limbs of another Buddha. A confused company of idols is ranged in the obscurity along the walls.

Returning, I see the central temple from the rear. High on the wall of an embrasure a many-colored tympan represents some legend among olive-trees. I re-enter. The back of the repository where the colossi are exposed is a great painted sculpture:

Amitofou mounting to Heaven amid flames and demons. The setting sun, passing through the trellised openings high in the wall, sweeps the somber boxlike hall with horizontal rays.

The bonzes continue the ceremony. Kneeling now before the colossi, they are intoning a chant, while the celebrant, standing before a bell shaped like a cask, leads the measured beat of drums and bells. At each verse he clashes the drum, drawing from its brazen belly a re-echoing vibration. Then, facing each other in two lines, they recite some litany.

The side buildings are the dwellings of the priests. One of them enters, carrying a pail of water. I glance into the refectory where the bowls of rice are placed two by two on the empty tables.

I am again before the tower.

Just as the pagoda expresses, by its system of courts and buildings, the extent and the dimensions of Space; so the tower symbolizes Height. Poised against the sky, it becomes the scale of it. The seven octagonal stories are a plan of the seven mystic heavens. The architect has narrowed their corners and lifted their borders with skill. Each story casts its own shadow below it. At every angle of every roof a

bell is attached, and beside it hangs the clapper with which to strike it. Their metallic syllables are the mysterious voice of each Heaven, and their unuttered sound hangs suspended like a drop.

I have nothing more to say of the pagoda. I do not know its name.

THE CITY AT NIGHT

IT is raining softly. The night has come. The policeman takes the lead and turns to the left, ceasing his talk of the time when, as a kitchen-boy in the invading army, he saw his Major installed in the sanctuary of the "God of Long Life." The road that we follow is mysterious. By a series of alleys, of passages, stairs, and doorways, we come out in the court of the temple, where buildings with clawlike copings and hornlike peaks make a black frame to the night sky. A smoldering fire flickers from the dark doorway. We penetrate the blackness of the hall.

The cave is filled with incense, glowing with red light. One cannot see the ceiling. A wooden grille separates the idol from his clients, and from the table of offerings, where garlands of fruit and bowls of food are deposited. The bearded face of a giant image can be vaguely distinguished. The priests are dining, seated about a round table. Against the wall is a drum as enormous as a tun, and a great gong in the form of the ace of spades. Two red tapers, like

square columns, lose themselves in the smoke and the night, where vague pennants float.

Onward!

The narrow tangle of streets, where we are involved in the midst of a shadowy crowd, is lit only by the deep open booths which border it. These are the work-rooms of carpenters, engravers; the shops of tailors, shoemakers, and venders of fur. From innumerable kitchens, behind the display of bowls of noodles and soup, the sound of frying escapes. In a dark recess some woman attends a crying child. Among stacked-up coffins is the gleam of a pipe. A lamp, a sidewise flicker, shows strange medleys. At the street corners, at the bends of heavy little stone bridges, in niches behind iron bars, dwarfish idols can be seen between two red candles. After a long progress under the rain, in the darkness and filth, we find ourselves suddenly in a yellow blind alley which a big lantern lights with a brutal flare. Color of blood, color of pestilence, the high walls of the dungeon where we are have been daubed with an ocher so red that it seems of itself to irradiate light. The door at our left is simply a round hole.

We reach a court. Here is another temple. It is a shadowy hall from which

exudes an odor of earth. It is enriched with idols, which, disposed in two rows around three sides of the place, brandish swords, lutes, roses, and branches of coral. They tell us that these are the years of human life. While I try to find the twenty-seventh, I am left behind; and, before leaving, the fancy takes me to look into a niche that I find on the further side of the door. A brown demon with four pairs of arms, his face convulsed by rage, is hidden there like an assassin.

Forward! The roads become more and more miserable. We go past high palisades of bamboo; and at last, emerging from the southern gate, we turn toward the east. The road follows the base of a high crenellated wall. On the other hand sink the deep trenches of a dried river-bed. Below we see sampans lit by cooking fires. A shadowy people swarm there like the spirits of the Inferno.

And undoubtedly this lamentable river-bank marks the end planned for our exploration, because we retrace our steps. City of Lanterns, we gaze again upon the chaos of thy ten thousand faces!

Seeking an explanation, a reason why this town where we loitered is so distinct in our memories, we are struck at once

with this fact: there are no horses in the streets. The city is entirely of human beings. It seems an article of faith with the Chinese not to employ an animal or a machine for work by which a man may live. This explains the narrowness of the streets, the stairs, the curved bridges, the houses without fences, the sinuous windings of the alleys and passages. The city forms a coherent whole, an industrious honeycomb communicating in all its parts, perforated like an ant-hill. When the night comes, every one barricades himself. During the day there are no doors, that is to say no doors that close. The door here has no official function. It is simply an opening. Not a wall but can by some fissure give passage to an agile and slender person. The large streets necessary to general traffic, and to an ordered mechanical life, would be of no use here. Here merely collective alleys and passages are provided.

An opium den, a market of prostitutes, these last fill the framework of my memory. The smoking den is a vast nave, empty all the height of two stories which superimpose their balconies inside. The building is full of blue smoke, one breathes an odor of burning chestnuts. It is a heavy perfume, powerful, stagnant, strong as the beat

of a gong. Sepulchral smoke, it establishes between our air and dreams a middle atmosphere which the seeker of these mysteries inhales. One sees across the haze the fire of little opium lamps like the souls of the smokers. Later they will arrive in greater numbers. Now it is too early.

On narrow benches, their heads helmed with flowers and pearls, clothed in wide blouses of silk and full embroidered trousers, motionless, with their hands on their knees, the prostitutes wait in the street like beasts at a fair, in the pell-mell and the dust of passers-by. Beside their mothers and dressed like them, also motionless, little girls are seated on the same bench. Behind, a flare of petrol lights the opening to the stairway.

I go. And I carry the memory of a life congested, naïve, restless; of a city at the same time open and crowded, a single house with a multifold family. I have seen the city of other days, when, free of modern influences, men swarmed in an artless disorder; in fact it is the fascination of all the past that I am leaving, when, issuing out of the double gate in the hurly-burly of wheelbarrows and litters, in the midst of lepers and epileptics, I see the electric lights of the Concession shine.

GARDENS

IT is half-past three: white mourning.* The sky is veiled as if with white linen. The air is moist and raw. I go into the city. I am looking for gardens.

I walk in a black gravy. Along the ditch whose crumbling border I follow, the odor is so strong that it is like an explosive. There is the smell of oil, garlic, filth, ashes, opium, and offal. I walk amid a free and easy people who are shod with thick buskins or sandals of straw, wearing long hoods or skullcaps of felt, their silk or linen trousers tucked into leggings.

The wall winds and undulates, and its coping, an arrangement of bricks and open-work tiles, imitates the back and body of a crawling dragon. A sort of head terminates it, from which floats a cloud of smoke. This is the place. I knock mysteriously at a little black door which opens. Under the overhanging roofs I cross a succession of vestibules and narrow corridors. I am in a strange place.

It is a garden of stones. . . . Like the

* White is the color of Chinese mourning.

ancient Italian and French designers, the Chinese have understood that a garden, from the fact of its inclosure, must be complete in itself and harmonious in all its parts. Only so will nature adapt herself to our moods, and only so, by a subtle harmony, will the master feel at home wherever he looks. Just as a landscape does not consist simply of its grass and the color of its foliage, but is distinguished by its outlines and the slope of the ground, so the Chinese literally construct their gardens with stones. They are sculptors instead of painters. Because it is susceptible of elevation and depth, of contours and reliefs, through the variety of its planes and surfaces, stone seems to them a more suitable medium for creating a background for Man than are plants, which they reduce to their normal place of decoration and ornament.

Nature herself has prepared the materials. The hand of Time, the frost, the rain, wear away, work at the rock; perforating it, gashing it, probing it with a searching finger. Faces, animals, skeletons, hands, shells, bodies without heads, petrified wood like a congealed mass of broken figures, mingled with leaves and fishes; Chinese art seizes all these strange objects, imitates them,

and arranges them with an ingenious industry.

This garden represents a mountain cleft by a precipice, to which steep paths give access. Its feet bathe in a little lake half covered with green scum, where a zigzag bridge completes the bias outline. Built upon a foundation of pink granite piles, the tea-house mirrors in the greenish black waters of the basin its soaring double roofs, which seem to lift it from the earth like outspread wings.

Below, driven straight into the earth like iron candlesticks, the stripped trees bar the sky, their giant stature dominating the garden. I wander among the stones by a long labyrinth whose windings and turnings, ascents and evasions, amplify and complicate the scene, simulating the mazes of a dream around the lake and the mountain. Finally I attain the kiosk on the summit. The garden seems to sink below me like a valley full of temples and pavilions, and among the trees appears the poem of the roofs.

They are high and low, detached and massed, elongated like a pediment or swelling like a bell. They are surmounted with ornamental friezes decorated with centipedes and fishes. At the intersections of

their ridges the peaks display stags, storks, altars, vases, and wingèd pomegranates — all symbolic. The roofs, lifted up at the corners like arms which hold up a too ample robe, have a creamy whiteness or the blackness of soot yellowed and sodden. The air is green, as when one looks through old window-glass.

The other slope brings us before the great pavilion. The descent winds slowly toward the lake by irregular steps leading to other surprises. Coming out of an alley, I see pointing in disorder toward the sky five or six horns of a roof whose building is hidden from me. Nothing could paint the drunken toss of these fairy prows, the proud elegance of these flowering stalks, holding up a lily to the envious clouds. Bourgeoning with this flower, the strong framework lifts itself like a branch that one lets spring.

I reach the border of the pond where the stalks of dead lotus flowers lie across the still waters. The silence is as profound as the depth of a winter forest. This harmonious place was built for the pleasure of the members of a Syndicate of Commerce in beans and rice, who doubtless come here in the spring nights to drink tea and watch the shore glimmer under the moon.

The other garden is more singular.

It was almost night when, penetrating into its square enclosure, I saw it filled to its walls with a vast landscape. Picture a mass of rocks, a chaos, a confusion of overthrown blocks, heaped up together as if by the force of the sea; a vision of madness, a country as ghastly as a brain with its convolutions bared. The Chinese flay their landscapes. Inexplicable as nature, this little corner seems also as vast and as complex. Among these rocks rises a dark and twisted pine-tree. The warped trunk, the color of its bristling tufts, the violent dislocation of its limbs, the disproportion of this single tree with the artificial country which it dominates, — like a dragon issuing from the earth in smoke, combating the wind and the storms, — make this place unreal, render it grotesque and fantastic. Here and there funereal foliage, yews and arbor-vitæ, in their vigorous blackness, intensify this cataclysm. In my amazement I ponder this melancholy document. And in the middle of the enclosure one great rock stands in the dusk of twilight like a monster, — a theme of reverie and enigma.

THE FEAST OF THE DEAD IN THE SEVENTH MONTH

INGOTS of paper are the money of the dead. From thin cards are cut the figures of persons, houses, and animals. The dead man must be followed by these fragile imitations, these patterns of living things; and, if burned, they will accompany him where he goes. The flute guides such souls, the beat of a gong assembles them like bees. In the shadowy darkness, the brilliance of a flame soothes and satisfies them.

Along the bank of the river the prepared barges wait for the night to come. Scarlet tinsel is fastened to the end of a pole; and, whether the river at this turning seems to derive the color of its waters from a leaden sky, or whether it moves its swarming life mysteriously under accumulated clouds,— still the torches flare at the prow, the festoons of lanterns toss from the mast, brightening the gloom with a vivid note,— as a candle held in the hand in a spacious room lightens the solemn emptiness of the night. Meanwhile the signal is given, the flutes shrill out, the gong sounds, firecrackers

explode, the three boatmen lean to the long scull. The barge starts and tacks, leaving in the wide sweep of its rudder a trail of fire. Some one is strewing little lamps. Uncertain glimmers on the vast flow of the opaque waters, these flicker a moment and perish. An arm seizes the tinsel streamer, the ball of fire which sinks and flares in the smoke, and touches them to the tomb of the waters; the illusory brightness of the light, like the gleaming of fish, fascinates the cold drowned. Other illuminated barges go and come. Far off are heard detonations, and on the war-ships two bugles, answering one another, sound together the extinguishing of the fires.

The loitering stranger who, from the shore, contemplates the vast night open before him like a chart, will hear the return of the religious barge. The torches are extinguished, the shrill hautboy has died away, but, over a precipitate beating of drumsticks, dominated by a continual rolling of drums, the funereal gong continues its tumult and its dance. Who is it that beats? The sound rises and falls, ends, recommences, and presently swells to a clamor as if impatient hands beat on the metal hung between two worlds. Then solemnly, beneath the measured strokes,

the gong returns a deep reverberation. The boat approaches. It passes the river-bank and the fleet of moored craft; and now, in the heavy darkness of the opium barges, it is at my feet. I can see nothing; but the funeral orchestra, which had died away for a long interval, now, after the fashion of dogs that howl, explodes again in the darkness.

This is the feast of the seventh month when the earth enters into its repose. Along the road the rickshaw-runners have stuck in the earth between their feet sticks of incense and little red candle-ends. I must return. Tomorrow I shall come to sit in the same place. It is all over; and still, like the sightless dead sunk beneath an infinity of waves, I hear the tone of the sepulchral sistrum, the clamor of iron drums beaten with terrible blows in the close darkness.

THOUGHTS ON THE SEA

THE boat makes her way between the islands; the sea is so calm that it scarcely seems to exist. Eleven o'clock in the morning, and it is hard to tell whether or not it is raining.

The thoughts of the voyager turn to the past year. He sees again his trip across the ocean in the stormy night; the ports, the stations, the arrival on Shrove Sunday, the trip to the house when, with a cold eye, he scanned the sordid festivities of the crowd through the mud-spattered windows of his carriage. His thoughts show him again his parents, his friends, old scenes,— and then the new departure. Unhappy retrospect! As if it were possible for anyone to retrieve his past.

It is this that makes the return sadder than the departure. The voyager re-enters his home as a guest. He is a stranger to all, and all is strange to him. (Servant, hang up the traveling cloak and do not carry it away! Soon it will be necessary to depart once more.) Seated at the family table he is a suspected guest, ill at ease.

No, parents, it is never the same! This is a passer-by whom you have received, his ears filled with the fracas of trains and the clamor of the sea, like a man who imagines that he still feels beneath his feet the profound movement that lures him away. He is not the same man whom you conducted to the fateful wharf. The separation has taken place and he has entered upon the exile that follows it!

CITIES

AS there are books on beehives, on colonies of birds' nests, or on the constitution of coral islands, why should we not study thus the cities of humanity?

Paris, the capital of the Kingdom, uniform and concentric in its development, expands, as it grows, into a larger likeness of the island to which it was once confined. London is a juxtaposition of stores, warehouses, and factories. New York is a railway terminal, built of houses between tracks. It is a pier for landing, a great jetty flanked by wharves and warehouses. Like the tongue, which receives and divides its food, like the uvula at the back of the throat placed between two channels, New York, between her two rivers, the North and the East, has set her docks and her storehouses on one side, Long Island; on the other, by Jersey City and the dozen railway lines which range their depots on the embankment of the Hudson, she receives and sends out the merchandise of all the Western continent. The active part of the city, composed entirely of banks, exchanges, and offices, is on the

tip of this tongue, which — not to push this figure too far — moves incessantly from one end to the other.

Boston is composed of two parts: the new city, pedantic and miserly, like a man who, displaying his riches and his virtue, yet guards them for himself, — where the streets, open on all sides to avenues, seem to become more silent and longer in the cold, and to listen with more spite to the step of the passer-by who follows them, grinding his teeth in the blast; and the hill where the old city, like a snail-shell, contains all the windings of traffic, debauchery, and hypocrisy.

The streets of Chinese cities are made for a people accustomed to walking in single file; each individual takes his place in an interminable, endless line. Between the houses resembling boxes with one side knocked out, where the inhabitants sleep pell-mell among the merchandise, these narrow fissures are insinuated.

Are there not special points for study? The geometry of streets, the measurement of turnings, the calculus of crowded thoroughfares, the disposition of avenues? Is not all movement parallel to these, and all rest or pleasure perpendicular?

A book indeed!

THE THEATER

THE palace of the Corporation of Canton has a niche for its golden god, — an inner hall where great seats, placed solemnly about the center, indicate rather than invite repose. And, as European clubs would place a library, they have established a theater, with parade and pomp, on the far side of the court which is in front of the whole building. It is a terrace of stone deep in between two buildings. Consisting only of a difference in level, the stage between the wings and the crowd is simply a wide, flat space above their heads. A square canopy like that of a dais shades and consecrates it. Another portico in the foreground, framing it in four pillars of granite, confers on it solemnity and distance. Here comedy develops, legends are told, the vision of the things which are to be reveals itself in rolling thunder.

The curtain, comparable to that veil which divides us from the world of dreams, does not exist here. But as if each soul, in discarding its disguises, were held in an impenetrable tissue, whose colors and elu-

sive brightness are like the livery of night; each actor in his silken draperies shows nothing of himself but the movement when he stirs. Beneath the plumage of his part the golden headdress, the face hidden under rouge and mask, he is no more than a gesture and a voice. The emperor mourns over his lost kingdom, the unjustly accused princess flees from monsters and savages, armies defile, combats take place, a gesture effaces years and distances, debates proceed before the elders, the gods descend, the genie arises from the jar. But never does any one of the persons engaged in the execution of a chant or of a complicated dance deviate from the rhythm and the harmonies which time the measure and rule the evolutions, any more than he would throw off his clothes.

The orchestra at the back, — which throughout the piece continues its evocatory tumult, as if, like swarms of bees that reassemble at the beating of a caldron, the scenic phantoms would dissipate if there were silence, — has less a musical rôle than the service of sustaining the whole, playing (if we may call this prompting music) and answering for a chorus of the populace. It is the music which accelerates or moderates the movement, which heightens with

an accent more acute the discourse of the actor, or which, surging up behind him, brings to his ears clamor and rumor. There are guitars, bits of wood that are beaten like tympans, that are clashed like castanets; a sort of monochord violin which, like a fountain in a solitary court, by the thread of its plaintive melody, carries the development of the elegy; and finally, in the heroic movements, the trumpet. It is a sort of bugle of brass, of which the sound, charged with harmonies, has an incredible brilliance and a terrible stridence. It is like the braying of an ass, like a shout in the desert, a flourish to the sun, the clamor volleyed from the diaphragm of an elephant. But the gongs and cymbals hold the principal place. Their discordant racket excites and stimulates the emotions, deafening thought, which in a sort of dream sees only the spectacle before it. Meanwhile at one side of the scene, hung in a cage of woven rushes, are two birds like turtledoves. These it seems are *pelitze* brought from Tientsin. Competing innocently with the uproar in which they bathe, they jet a song of celestial sweetness.

The hall under the second portico, and the entire court, is stuffed as full as a pie with living heads. Among them emerge

the pillars, and two lions of sandstone with froglike jaws whose heads are bonneted with children. It is a pavement of skulls and round yellow faces, so closely packed that the limbs and bodies cannot be seen. Pressed together, the hearts of the crowd beat one against the other. It oscillates with but one movement. Sometimes, stretching a row of arms, it surges against the stone wall of the stage; sometimes, withdrawing, is hidden by the sides. In the upper galleries, the wealthy and the mandarins smoke their pipes and drink tea in cups with brass saucers, surveying like gods both spectacle and spectators. As the actors themselves are hidden in their robes, so, as it enters each bosom, does the drama stir under the living stuff of the crowd.

TOMBS AND RUMORS

WE climb and then descend; we pass by the great banyan which, like Atlas, settling himself powerfully on his contorted haunches, seems awaiting with knee and shoulder the burden of the sky. At his feet there is a little edifice where are burned all papers marked with black characters, as if a sacrifice of writing was offered to the god of the tree.

We turn and turn again, and by a sinuous road we enter into a country of tombs. Not, indeed, that they were not everywhere, because our steps since our departure have been accompanied by them. The evening star, like a saint praying in solitude, sees the sun disappear beneath her under the deep and diaphanous waters. The funereal region that we scan in the pallid light of a dreary, waning day, is covered with a rude and yellow growth like the pelt of a tiger. From the base to the ridge are hillocks between which our road winds; and, on the opposite side of the valley, as far as the eye can reach, are moun-

tains burrowed like a rabbit-warren with tombs.

In China death holds as great a place as life. As soon as they have gone the dead become more important and more to be suspected, enduring as morose and malevolent powers whom it is well to conciliate. The bonds between the living and the dead are broken with difficulty. The rites continue and are perpetuated. The living must go frequently to the family tomb. They burn incense, fire off crackers, and offer rice and pork. In the shape of a scrap of paper they leave a visiting-card held in place with a pebble. The dead in their thick coffins rest a long time inside the house. Then they are carried out of doors and piled up in low sheds, until the geomancer has found the proper site and location. Then the final resting-place is determined on with great particularity, for fear that the dissatisfied spirits should wander elsewhere. They cut the tombs in the sides of mountains, in the solid and primordial earth; and, while the living, in unhappy multitudes, are crowded in valley-bottoms, in low and malarial plains, the dead open their dwellings to sun and space in high and airy places.

The form of an Omega is chosen, placed

flat against the hill-slope; and the semi-circle of stone, completed by the brace, surrounds the dead person, who makes a mount in the center like a sleeper under his coverings. It is thus that the earth, opening her arms, makes him her own and consecrates him to herself. In front is placed the tablet inscribed with the titles and names; because the Chinese believe that certain portions of the soul, that stop to read the name, linger above the tomb. This tablet forms the reredos of a stone altar on which are deposited the symmetrically arranged offerings. In front of this the tomb, by the formal arrangement of its terraces and balustrades, welcomes and receives the living family who go there on solemn days to honor the remains of the deceased ancestor. Primordial and testamentary hieroglyph! Facing it, the hemicycle reverberates the invocation. All earth which is above the level of mud is occupied by these vast low tombs, like the openings of pits crammed full. There are little ones, simple ones and elaborate, some new and others which seem as old as the rocks where they lean. The most important are high on the mountain, as if in the folds of its neck. A thousand men together could kneel in this tomb.

I myself live in this country of sepulchers, and by a different road I regain my house on the summit of the hill.

The town is below on the other side of the wide yellow river Min, which precipitates its deep and violent waters between the arches of the Bridge of Ten Thousand Ages. During the day one can see, like the copings of the tombs, the rampart of jagged mountains that enclose the city. The flying pigeons and the tower in the middle of a pagoda make one feel the immensity of this distance. And I can see the two-horned roofs, two wooded hills rising between the houses, and on the river a confusion of wooden rafts and junks whose poops are painted with pictures. But now it is too dark. Scarcely a fire pricks the dusk and the mist beneath me, and by a road I know, slipping into the funereal darkness of the pines, I gain my habitual post, this great triple tomb blackened with moss and age, oxidized like armor, which thrusts its frowning parapet obliquely into space.

I come here to listen.

Chinese cities have neither factories nor vehicles. The only noise that can be heard, when evening comes and the fracas of trade ceases, is the human voice. I come to

listen for that; for, when one loses interest in the sense of the words that are offered him, he can still lend them a more subtle ear. Nearly a million inhabitants live here. I listen to the speech of this multitude far under a lake of air. It is a clamor at once torrential and crackling, shot through with sudden abrupt rips like the tearing of paper. I am sure one can distinguish now and then a note and its modulations, as one does a chord on a drum, by putting his fingers on the right places. Has the city a different murmur at different times in the day? I propose to test it. At this moment it is evening. They are volubly publishing the day's news. Each one believes that he alone is speaking. He recounts quarrels, meals, household happenings, family affairs, his work, his commerce, his politics. But his words do not perish. They carry — part of the innumerable additions to the collective voice. Shorn of their meaning they continue only as the unintelligible elements of the sound which carries them; utterance, intonation, accent. As there is a mingling of sounds, is there a blending of the sense? And what is the grammar of this general discourse? Guest of the dead, I listen long

to the murmur, the noise that the living make afar!

Now it is time to return. The pines, between whose high shafts I pursue my road, deepen the shadows of night. It is the hour when one commences to see the fire-flies, hearth fires of the grass. As in the depth of meditation an intuition passes, so quickly that the spirit can perceive merely a glimmer, a sudden indication; so this impalpable crumb of fire burns, and in the same moment is extinguished.

THE ENTRANCE TO THE EARTH

RATHER than assail the escarpments of the mountain with the iron point of my stick I should prefer to see, from this low, flat plain across which I wander, the mountains seated around me like a hundred ancient men in the glory of the afternoon. The sun of Pentecost illumines the earth, swept and garnished and impressive as a church. The air is so cool and so clear that it seems as if I walked naked. All is peace. One hears on all sides, like the cry of a flute, the notes of chain-pumps in unison, drawing water from the fields (three by three, the men and women beat upon the triple wheel, their arms hooked to the beam, their laughing faces covered with sweat), and a friendly territory opens before the steps of the walker.

I measure with my eyes the circuit I must follow. I know how, from the top of the mountain, the plain with its fields will resemble an old stained-glass window with irregular panes set in a network of lead. By straight footpaths of the earth that frames the rice-fields, I finally begin on the paved way.

It crosses the rice-fields, the orange groves, the villages, — guarded at one outlet by their great banyan (the Father to whom all the children of the country are brought for adoption) and at the other, not far from the wells of water and pits of manure, by the fane of the local gods who, both armed from head to foot with bow at belly, painted on the gate, roll their tri-colored eyes toward each other. And, as I advance turning my head from right to left, I taste slowly the changes of the hours, because, as a perpetual wayfarer, a wise judge of the length of shadows, nothing of the august ceremony of the day escapes me. Drunk with beholding, I understand it all. This bridge still to cross in the peace of the lunch hour, these hills to climb and to descend, this valley to traverse; and already I see, between three pines, the steep rock where I must take up my post to assist at the crowning ceremony of that which was a day.

It is the moment of solemn reception when the sun crosses the threshold of the earth. Fifteen hours ago it passed the line of the illimitable sea; and, like an eagle resting motionless on its wings to examine the country from afar, it has gained the highest part of the sky. Now it declines its course

and the earth opens to receive it. The gorge to which the sun sets its mouth disappears under the level rays as if it were devoured by fire. The mountain where a conflagration has flared up like a crater, sends toward the sky an enormous column of smoke. And below, touched by an oblique ray, the line of a torrent flashes. Behind spreads out the earth of all the earth, Asia with Europe; like the central height of an altar, an immense plain; and then, far beyond that, like a man flat on his face on the water, France; and, in the thickest of France, joyous and fertile Champagne. Only the top of the golden targe can be seen now, and at the moment it disappears the evening star sends across the sky a dark and vertical ray. It is the time when the sea which follows it, lifting itself from its bed with a profound cry, hurls its shoulder against the earth.

Now I must go. So high that I must lift my chin to see it, the summit of Kuchang, detached by a cloud, is hung like an island in the exquisite spaces; and, thinking of nothing else, I walk as though my head were detached from my body, — like a man whom the acidity of too strong a perfume has satiated.

THE RELIGION OF LETTERS

LET others discover in the range of Chinese characters either the head of a sheep, the arms and legs of a man, or the sun setting behind a tree. For my part I seek a more difficult clue.

All writing commences with a symbol or line which, considered as a whole, is a pure characterization of the individual. Either the line is horizontal, like all things which, in simply conforming to the laws of their being, find sufficient reason for existence; or it is vertical, like the tree and the man, indicating acts and laying down affirmations; or, if oblique, it marks movement and the senses.

The Roman letter has had the vertical line for its principle; the Chinese character seems to have the horizontal as its essential trait. The letter with an imperious downstroke affirms that a thing is so; the character is the very thing that it signifies.

One symbol or another is equally a sign. Let us take figures for example. They are all equally abstract images, but the letter is essentially analytic. Each word

is an enunciation of successive affirmations that the eye and the voice spell out. Unit is added to unit on the same line, and the Protean syllable changes and is modified in a continual variation. But the Chinese sign develops the figure, and, applying it to a series of beings, it differentiates their characters indefinitely. A word exists by a succession of letters, a character by the relation of its strokes. May we not imagine that in these the horizontal line indicates, for example, the species; the vertical, the individual; the oblique, diverse of movement, that group of traits and energies which gives meaning to the whole; the period, distinct on the white page, signifying something that can only be implied? One can therefore see in the Chinese character a completely developed being, a written person, having, like a person who lives, his nature and his moods, his own acts and his inner individuality, his structure and physiognomy.

This explains the piety with which the Chinese regard writing. They burn with respect the humblest paper marked with a vestige of this mystery. The sign is a being; and, from the fact that it is common to all, it becomes sacred. With them the representation of ideas is almost an idol.

Such is the foundation of that scriptural religion which is peculiar to China. Yesterday I visited a Confucian temple.

It was in a solitary quarter where everything spoke of desertion and decay. In the silence and burning heat of the sun at three o'clock, we followed the sinuous street. Our entrance is not to be by the great door where the proud rot in their enclosure, where that high column marked with an official inscription in two languages guards the worn sill. A woman, short and round-backed as a pig, opens a side passage for us; and, with echoing footfalls, we penetrate into the deserted court.

By the proportions of the court and of the peristyles which frame it; by the spacious intercolumniations and the horizontal lines of the façade; by the repetition of the two enormous roofs, which lift their massive black curves with a single sweep; by the symmetrical disposition of the two little pavilions which are before it and which lighten the severity of the whole with the agreeable grotesques of their octagonal roofs; the building (to apply the essential laws of architecture) is given a learned aspect, a classic beauty in short, due to an exquisite observation of rule.

The temple is composed of two parts.

I suppose that the passages with their rows of tablets on the walls, each one preceded by a long, narrow altar of stone, offer to a hasty worship the primary series of precepts. Lifting our feet to avoid the sill which it is forbidden to tread upon, we penetrate into the shade of the sanctuary.

The vast high hall has the air of holding an occult presence. It is utterly empty. Here silence sits veiled in obscurity. Here are no ornaments, no statues. On each side of the hall we distinguish, between their curtains, great inscriptions; and, before them, altars; but in the middle of the temple, behind five monumental pieces of stone, three vases and two candlesticks; under an edifice of gold, a baldachin or a tabernacle which frames it on all sides; four characters are inscribed upon a vertical column.

Here writing possesses this mystery: it speaks. No moment marks its duration, no position. It is the commencement of an ageless sign. No mouth offers it. It exists; and the worshiper, face to face with it, ponders the written name. Solemnly enunciated in the gloom of the shadowy gold of the baldachin, the sign, between the two columns which are covered with the mystic windings of the dragon, symbolizes its own silence. The immense

red hall seems to be the very color of obscurity, the pillars are hidden under a scarlet lacquer. Alone in the middle of the temple, before the sacred word, two columns of white granite seem its witness; the very soul, religious and abstract, of the place.

THE BANYAN

THE banyan toils.

This giant does not, like his brother in India, endeavor to seize upon the earth again with his hands; but, raising himself with one turn of the shoulder, he lifts his roots to heaven like accumulated chains. Hardly has the trunk lifted itself several feet above the soil than it stretches its limbs laboriously, each like an arm which tugs away at a bundle of cords it has grasped. With a slow lengthening out, the hauling monster strains himself and labors in all the attitudes of effort so hard that the rude bark splits and the muscles stand out from the skin. There is the straight thrust, the flexing and the support, the twist of loin and shoulder, the slackening of haunches, the play of fulcrum and jack, the straightening up or reaching down of arms which seem to put the body out of joint. It is a knot of pythons, it is a hydra stubbornly tearing itself away from the tenacious earth. You might say that the banyan lifts a burden from the depths and upholds it with its straining limbs.

Honored by the humble settlement, at the gate of the village he is a patriarch clothed

in shadowy foliage. At his feet is installed a furnace for offerings; and, in his very heart, under the spreading of his branches, is an altar with a stone doll. Witness of all that passes, possessor of the earth encompassed by multitudinous roots, here the ancient lives; and, whether alone with the children or at the hour when all the village reassembles under the twisted projections of his boughs (as the rosy rays of the moon, passing across the openings of his canopy, illumine the cabal with an outline of gold), the colossal tree, wherever his shadow turns, perseveres in imperceptible effort, adding the passing moment to his accumulated centuries.

Somewhere in mythology are honored the heroes who have distributed water to a country, and, striking a great rock, have delivered the obstructed mouth of a fountain. I see standing in the banyan a Hercules of the vegetable world, a monument of majestic labor. Would it not seem to be by his labors (this monster in chains, who vanquishes the avaricious resistance of the earth) that the springs gush forth and overflow, that grass grows afar off, and water is held at its level in the rice-fields.

He toils.

TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN

COMING out barefoot on the verandah, I look toward the left. On the brow of the mountain, among the torn clouds, a touch of phosphorus indicates the dawn. A movement of lamps in the house, a breakfast while still sleepy and benumbed; and then, with packages stowed away, we start. By the rugged coast we drop down to the neighboring city.

It is the vague hour when cities awaken. Already the open-air cooks blow fires under their stoves. Already in the depths of certain booths a vacillating light illumines nude bodies. In spite of spiked boards that have been placed flat against openings or hung over cornices, — huddled in corners in every free space, men stretch and sleep. Half awake, one scratches his side and stares at us out of the corner of his eyes with an air of delicious comfort. Another sleeps so heavily that you would think he was stuck to the stones. An old man, who has the appearance of being clothed in the scum that forms on stagnant waters, combs his mangy skull with his two hands. And

finally, I must not forget that beggar with the head of a cannibal — his wildly disheveled hair bristling like a black bush — who, with one gaunt knee extended, lies flat under the first rays of morning.

Nothing could be stranger than a town at the hour when it sleeps. These streets seem like avenues in a necropolis. These houses exude sleep. And all of them, because of their closed doors, seem to me solemn and monumental. Every one, in the sleep wherein he is buried, suffers that singular change which comes over the faces of the dead. Like a little child with unfocused eyes, who frets and kneads the breast of his nurse with a feeble hand, the man who sleeps, with a great sigh, presses his face to the deep earth. Everything is silent because it is the hour when the earth gives to drink, and no one of her children turns in vain to her liberal breast. The poor and the rich, the young and the old, the just and the unjust, the judge with the prisoner, and man like the animals, all of them drink together like foster-brothers! All is mystery because this is the hour when Man communicates with his mother. The sleeper sleeps and cannot be awakened. He holds the breast and will not let it go. This draught still flows for him.

The street exudes odors of filth and hair.

Now the houses become fewer. We pass groups of banyans; and, in the pond that they shade, a great buffalo, of which we can only see the back and the moon-curved horns, stares at us with eyes of heavy stupor. We pass lines of women going to the fields. When one laughs her mirth spreads and grows feebler on the four faces that follow, and is effaced on the fifth. At the hour when the first ray of the sun traverses the virginal air, we gain the vast and empty plain; and, leaving behind us the tortuous road, we take our way toward the mountain across the fields of rice, tobacco, beans, pumpkins, cucumbers, and sugar-cane.

THE GREAT SEA

CLIMBING one day, I reach the plateau, and, in its basin of mountains where black islands emerge, I view afar off the great sea. Certainly, by a perilous path, it would be possible for me to gain the shore; but whether I follow its outline or whether I choose to take a boat, the surface remains impenetrable to my gaze. Well, then, I shall play on the flute, I shall beat the tom-tom; and the boat-woman, standing on one leg like a stork while with the other knee she supports her nursing baby as she conducts her sampan across the flat waters, will believe that the gods behind the drawn curtains of the clouds are enjoying themselves in the courts of their temple.

Or, unlacing my shoe, I shall throw it across the lake. Where it falls the passer-by will prostrate himself; and, having picked it up with superstitious awe, he will honor it with four sticks of incense. Or, curving my hands about my mouth, I shall cry out names. The words will die

first, then the sound; and the tone alone, reaching the ears of some one, will make him turn from side to side, like a man who hears himself called in a dream and makes an effort to break his bonds

THE TEMPLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I HAVE devoted more than one day simply to the discovery of it, ensconced upon its steep cliff of black rock, and it is not till late afternoon that I know myself to be upon the right path. From the giddy height where I climb, the wide rice-fields seem designed like a chart. The brink along which I move is so narrow that whenever I lift my right foot it is poised over the yellow expanse of the sown village fields spread out like a carpet below.

Silence. By an ancient staircase covered with a hoary lichen I descend in the pungent shade of the bay-trees, and, as the footpath at this turning is suddenly barred by a wall, I arrive at a closed door. I listen. No word, no voice, no drum! In vain I shake the wooden handle of the door, and beat upon it rudely with both hands.

Not even a bird cries as I scale the wall.

This place is inhabited after all; and while, sitting upon the balustrade where domestic linen is drying, I sink my teeth and fingers into the thick rind of a haddock stolen from the offerings, the old monk

inside prepares me a cup of tea. Neither the inscription above the door nor the dilapidated idols who are honored with a thin spire of incense in the depths of this humble cave seem to me to constitute the religion of the place, any more than the acid fruit that I munch; but here — on this low platform, which incloses a piece of muslin, — this circular straw mat where the *bhiku* will come soon to squat for meditation or sleep — is everything.

Let me compare this vast countryside, which opens out before me as far as the double wall of mountains and clouds, to a flower of which this seat is the mystic heart. Is it not the geometric center where the scene, united into an harmonious whole, virtually takes on existence and a consciousness of itself; and where, to the studious contemplation of the occupant, all lines converge?

The sun sets. I clamber up the steps of velvet whiteness where open pine-cones are strewn like roses.

OCTOBER

IN vain I see the trees still green. Whether a funereal haze enshroud it, or whether an enduring serenity of sky efface it, the year is not one day less near the fatal solstice. The sun does not deceive me, nor the widespread opulence of the country. There is a calm inexpressibly placid, a repose from which there is no awakening. The cricket has scarcely commenced his cry when he stills it, for fear of being an annoyance in the midst of plenty, since it is only dearth that gives him the right to speak. And it seems as if one were cautioned only with bare feet to penetrate into the fastnesses of these golden fields. No! The sky behind me does not radiate the same light over the wide harvest; and, as the road leads me by the stacks, whether I turn the corner of a pond here or whether I discover a village by going farther from the sun, I turn my face toward that broad pale moon which I have seen all day.

It was at the moment of emerging from the dark olives, when I saw the radiant

plain open out before me straight to the barriers of the mountain, that an interpretation was communicated to me. Oh last fruits of a condemned season! In the achievement of the day is the supreme maturity of the irretrievable year. *It is finished.*

The impatient hands of winter do not strip the earth barbarously. No winds tear at her; no frost splinters, no waters drown her. But more tenderly than May — or when insatiable June clings to the source of life, possessing the noon hour — the sky smiles at the earth with ineffable love. Like a heart which yields to continual importuning, is this consent; the grain separates from the ear, the fruit falls from the tree, the earth little by little abandons herself to the invincible solicitor of all. Death loosens a hand too full. The word that she hears now is holier than that of her wedding day, deeper, more tender and more glorious. *It is finished.*

The bird sleeps, the tree falls asleep in the shade which encompasses it, the sun at the level of the earth covers it with a long ray. The day is done, the year is consummated. To the celestial interrogation is returned this amorous response. *It is finished.*

NOVEMBER

THE sun sets on a day of peace and labor, yet men, women, and children, their disheveled hair full of dust and wisps of straw, their faces and legs stained with earth, work on. Here they cut rice, here they gather up the sheaves; and, as on wall-paper the same scene is repeated indefinitely, so on every side we see great wooden vats with men who, face to face, beat ears of corn against the sides; and already the plow commences to turn the clay again. All about is the odor of grain, the perfume of the harvest. At the end of the plain where the men are working is a wide river; and there, in the middle of the fields, an arch of triumph colored by the setting of the crimson sun completes the peaceable picture. A man who passes near me holds in his hand a flame-colored chicken, another carries at the ends of his bamboo a big tin teapot, hanging in front of him, — and behind him a package made of some green relishes, a bit of meat, a bundle of those slips of silver paper that are burned for the dead, and a fish hung beneath by a

straw. His blue blouse, his violet trousers, gleam against the lacquered gold of the stubble.

— Let no one mock my idle hands! The hurricane itself, and the weight of the sea that it hurls, cannot shake the heavy stone; but wood will float on the water, leaves yield to the air; I, still more trifling, fix my feet nowhere upon the earth, and the departing light draws me with it. By the dark roads of the villages, among pines and tombs, and along the far-stretched fields, I am the setting sun. Neither the happy plain nor the harmony of these mountains, nor the alluring color of the verdure on the ruddy harvest, can satisfy the eye which demands light itself. Below in that square moat, enclosed by the mountain with a rude wall, the air and the water burn with a mysterious fire. I see a gold so beautiful that all nature seems to me a dead mass; in comparison with that light the clarity that she can diffuse is darkest night. Desirable elixir, by what mystic route will I be led to participate in thy avaricious waters?

This evening the sun leaves me near a great orange tree that the family which it nourishes have begun to strip. A ladder is leaning against the tree. I hear speech

in the foliage. In the lingering neutral light of the hour I see the golden fruit gleam through the somber leaves. Coming nearer I see each twig etched clearly against the green of the evening. I regard the little red oranges, I breathe their bitter, strong aroma. Oh marvelous harvest, promised to One alone! Fruit shown to that immortal part of us which triumphs!

Before I reach the pines night falls and the cold moon lights me. This seems to me to be the difference: that the sun looks at us, but we look at the moon. Her face is turned away, and like a fire which lights up the bottom of the sea she makes every shadow become visible. . . . In the heart of this ancient tomb, in the thick grass of this ruined temple, under the form of fair ladies or wise old men, possibly I shall meet a company of foxes! They will offer me verses and riddles, they will make me drink their wine, and my way will be forgotten. These civil hosts wish to give me entertainment. They mount standing, one on top of another — and then, as the spell breaks, I find myself in the straight white footpath that leads me toward my home. But already in the depths of the valley I see a human fire burning.

PAINTING

LET some one fasten this piece of silk by the four corners for me, and I shall not put the sky upon it. The sea and its shores, the forest and the mountains, do not tempt my art. But from the top to the bottom and from one side to the other, as between new horizons, with an artless hand I shall paint the Earth. The limits of communities, the divisions of fields, will be exactly outlined, — those that are already plowed, those where the battalions of sheaves still stand. I shall not fail to count each tree. The smallest house will be represented with an ingenuous industry. Looking closely, you may distinguish the people; he who crosses an arched bridge of stone, parasol in hand; he who washes buckets at a pond; the litter traveling on the shoulders of two porters, and the patient laborer who plows a new furrow the length of the old. A long road bordered with a double row of skiffs crosses the picture from one corner to the other, and in one of the circular moats can be seen, in a scrap of azure for water, three quarters of a slightly yellow moon.

THE SOLITARY

HAVE I ever lived elsewhere than in this circular gorge hollowed in the heart of the rock? Doubtless at three o'clock a raven will not fail to bring me the bread I need, unless the perpetual sound of the falling water can keep me fat! A hundred feet above me, as if it gushed with violence out of the radiant heaven itself, between the bamboos that obstruct it, leaping the sudden verge, the torrent is engulfed and plunges in a vertical column, partly dark and partly luminous,—striking the floor of the cavern with re-echoing thunders.

No human eye could discover where I am. In shadows that only the noonday dissipates, the strand of this little lake, shaking with the unceasing plunge of the cascade, is my habitation. Above, where an inexhaustible torrent falls from the gorge, only this handful of sparkling milk-white water reaches me directly from the generous sky. The stream escapes by this turning; and sometimes, mingled with the cries of

the birds in the forest and with this soft gushing near me, I hear the voluble noise of falling waters behind me descending toward the earth.

DECEMBER

SWEEPING the country and the leafy valley, thy hand, reaching these purple and tan-colored lands that thine eyes discover below thee, is arrested by them on this rich brocade. All is quiet and muffled; no green shocks, nothing new and young jars on the composure of the scene, on the harmony of these full and hollow tones. A somber cloud occupies the whole sky, heaping with fog the cleft of the mountain. One might say that it was dovetailed into the horizon. With thy hand, December, caress these large adornments, tufts of black pine like brooches against the hyacinth of the plain; verify with thy fingers these details sunk in the enmeshing fog of this winter day: a row of trees, a village. Truly the hour is arrested. Like an empty theater, abandoned to melancholy, the sealed-up countryside seems to listen for a voice so shrill that I cannot hear it.

These afternoons in December are sweet. Nothing speaks as yet of the tormenting future, and the past is not yet so dead that it has no survivals. Of all the grass and of

such a great harvest nothing remains but strewn straw and dry brush. Cold water softens the ploughed earth. All is finished. This is the pause, the suspension, between one year and the next. Thought, delivered from her labor, gives herself up to recollection with a sweet taciturnity, and, meditating on new enterprises, like the earth she tastes her sabbath.

TEMPEST

IN the morning, leaving a shore the color of roses and of honey, our ship entered upon the high sea through streamers of low and sluggish fog. When, having wakened from this somber dream, I seek the sun, I see that it is setting behind us; but before us, bounding the black, dead spaces of the sea, one long mountain, like an embankment of snow, bars the north from one end of the sky to the other. This Alp lacks nothing, neither coldness nor rigidity. Alone in the midst of the solitude, like a combatant who advances in an enormous arena, our ship moves toward the white obstacle which rises cleaving the melancholy waters; and all at once a cloud hides the sky from us like the hood of a wagon drawn over it. In the cleft of daylight that it leaves on the horizon behind us, I look for the reappearance of the sun. The islands shine like a lighted lamp, and three junks stand out on the crest of the sea.

We are rushing now across a stretch of water that is roughened by the clouds. The surface heaves; and, as the motion of

the abyss affects our deck, the prow lifts and plunges, solemnly as if saluting, or like a cock who measures his adversary. It is night. From the north blows a harsh wind full of horror. On one side a ruddy moon, moving among disordered clouds, strikes through them with a lens-shaped edge; on the other the beacon-lamp of rippled red glass is hoisted to our foresail. Now all is calm again. The sheaf of water gushing always evenly before us, and shot with a mysterious fire, streams away from our prow like a body made of tears.

THE PIG

I SHALL paint here the pig's portrait. He is a solid beast, made all in one piece, without joints and without a neck; and he sinks in front like a sack, jolting along on four squat hams. He is a trumpet on the march, ever seeking; and to every odor that he scents he applies his pump-like body. He sucks it in. When he has found the necessary hole, he wallows enormously. This is not the wriggling of a duck who enters the water. It is not the sociable happiness of the dog. It is a deep, solitary, conscientious, integral enjoyment. He sniffs, he sips, he tastes, and you cannot say whether he eats or drinks. Perfectly round, with a little quiver, he advances and buries himself in the unctuous center of the fresh filth. He grunts, he sports in the recesses of his tripery. He winks an eye. Consummate amateur, although his ever-active smelling apparatus lets nothing escape, his tastes do not run to the transient perfumes of flowers or of frivolous fruits. In everything he searches for nourishment. He loves it rich and strong and ripe, and his

instinct attaches him to these two fundamental things, earth and ordure.

Glutton, wanton, though I present you with this model, admit this — that something is lacking to your satisfaction. The body is not sufficient to itself; but the doctrine that you teach us is not in vain. "Do not apply the eye alone to truth, but all that is thyself, without reserve." Happiness is our duty and our inheritance, a certain perfect possession is intended.

But like the sow which furnished the oracles to Æneas, the meeting with one always seems to me an augury, a social symbol. Her flank is more vague than hills seen through the rain, and when she litters, giving drink to a battalion of young boars who march between her legs, she seems to me the very image of those mountains which suckle the clusters of villages attached to their torrents, no less massive and no less misshapen.

I must not omit to say that the blood of the pig serves to fix gold.

THE SOURCE

LET other rivers carry toward the sea oak branches and the red infusion of rusty earth, roses and the bark of sycamores, strewn straw or slabs of ice; let the Seine in the damp mornings of December, when half-past eight sounds from the steeples of the city, unmoor under the rigid derricks barges of manure and lighters full of casks; let the River Haha, at the smoking crest of its rapids, erect all at once, like the rude semblance of a pike, the trunk of a hundred-foot pine tree; and let the Equatorial rivers carry in their turbid flow a confused world of trees and plants; yet, flat on my face, held fast against the current, the width of this one river is not equal to my arms, nor its depth sufficient to engulf me.

The promises of the Occident are not lies! Learn this: this gold does not vainly appeal to our blindness, it is not devoid of delights. I have found that it is insufficient to see, inexpedient to remain standing; upon analysis my enjoyment is in that of which I can take possession; for,

descending the steep bank with the feet of astonishment, I have discovered the source. The riches of the West are not forbidden me. Over the curve of the earth, straight toward me, they are rolling.

Not the silk molded by a hand or a bare foot, not the deep wool of the carpet used for the consecration of a king, can be compared to the resistance of this liquid depth where my own weight supports me. Neither the name of milk nor the color of the rose can be compared to this marvel whose descent I receive upon me. Truly I drink, truly I am plunged in wine! Let the ports open to receive the cargoes of wood and grain that come to them from the high countries; let the fishers tend their lines to catch wreckage and fish; let the searchers for gold filter the water and sift the sand; the river does not carry less riches to me. Do not say that I see, because the eye does not suffice for this, which demands a more subtle sense. To enjoy is to understand, and to understand is to evaluate.

At the hour when the holy light evokes to complete response the shadow that she dissipates, the surface of these waters opens a flowerless garden to my motionless navigation. Between these deep violet ripples the water is painted like the reflec-

tion of tapers, like amber, like palest green, like the color of gold. But silence! What I have discovered is mine, and now, as the water darkens, I will possess the night alone with all its visible and invisible stars.

DOORS

EVERY solid door opens upon less than is shut out by its particular panels. Many, through progress in the occult, have gained Yamen, the solitary state, and the court which a great silence fills; but if any one, after attaining this degree, at the moment when his hand is poised for a blow on the drum offered to visitors, hears the sound of his name penetrating the distance like a muffled cry (because the spouse or the sons of the dead are shouting loudly into his left ear), and if he vanquishes his fatal languor long enough to draw away one or two steps from the doors just barely opening to his desire, — his soul will regain its body. But no melody of a name can rescue those who have taken the irretrievable step over the secret sill. Without doubt I am in such a realm, on the shallow stones of this somber pond which surrounds me; as, standing within its ornate frame, I taste forgetfulness and the secret of this taciturn garden.

An ancient memory has not more wind-

ings or more secret passages than the road which has led me here, through a succession of courts, grottoes, and open corridors. The art of this restricted place is to hide its limits from me by bewildering me. Its undulant walls, which mount and descend, divide it into separate sections; and, while the tops of trees and the roofs of houses, showing through, seem to invite the guest to search out their secrets; these barriers, multiplying surprises and deceits in his path, lead him further away. Except for a wise dwarf with a skull like the belly of a gourd, or a pair of young storks surmounting its ornamental apex, the chalice of the roof shadows a hall not so deserted but that a half-consumed stick of incense still smokes there, and a forgotten flower fades. The princess and her old counselor have only just arisen from yonder seat and the greenish air is still full of the rustle of illustrious silk.

Fabulous indeed is my habitation! I see, in these walls where the pierced copings seem to melt away, banks of clouds; and these fantastic windows are as masses of leaves confusedly seen through the rifts. The wind, leaving on each side curving streamers, gashes irregular breaches in the fog. Let me not gather the flower of the

afternoon from any other garden than this, which I enter by a door in the outline of a vase, of a leaf, of a dragon's smoking jaws, of the setting sun when its disk reaches the sea-line, or of the rising moon!

THE RIVER

FROM the vast and yellow river my eyes return to our leadsman crouching at the side of the boat. Turning the line in his fist with a regular motion, he sends the lead in full flight across the muddy waters.

As the elements of a parallelogram unite, so water expresses the power of a country reduced to geometrical lines. Each drop is a fugitive calculation, a visible measurement always crossing the circumferential slope; and, having found the lowest point of a given area, it joins a current which flows with more impetus toward the deeper center of a still larger circle. This stream is immense in its force and extent. It is the outlet of a world. It is slow-moving Asia pouring forth. Powerful as the sea, this river has a destination and a source. The current is without branches or tributaries. We shall have mounted all these days in vain! We shall never reach the fork! Always before us, cleaving the countryside with irresistible power and volume, the river evenly divides the horizon of the West.

All water seems attractive to us, but certainly, more than the blue and virgin sea, this appeals to that in us which is between the flesh and the soul, — our human current charged with virtue and with spirit, the deep and burning blood. Here is one of the great laboring veins of the world, one of the arteries for the distribution of life. Beneath me I feel moving the protoplasm which strives and destroys, which fills and fashions us. And, while we remount this enormous river which melts about us into the gray sky and swallows up our route, it is the entire earth which we receive, the Earth of the earth: Asia, mother of all men, central, solid, primordial. Oh abundant bosom! Surely I see it, and it is vainly that the grass everywhere disguises it; I have penetrated this mystery. As water with a purple stain might attest some undeniable wound, so the earth has impregnated this river with her substance. It is solely of gold.

The sky is lowering. The clouds move slowly toward the north. To right and left I see a somber Mesopotamia. Here are neither villages nor cultivation; only here and there, between the stripped trees, four or five primitive huts, some fishing-tackle on the bank, and a ruined boat

which moves — a miserable vessel hoisting a rag for sail! Extermination has passed over this country, and the river which carries opulent life and nourishment waters a region no less deserted than where the first waters issued from Paradise, when Man, hollowing the horn of an ox, delivered the first rude, harsh cry in the echoless wastes.

THE RAIN

BY the two windows before me, the two at my left, and the two at my right, I see and hear the rain falling in torrents on every side. I think it is a quarter of an hour past noon. Luminous water is all about me. I dip my pen in the ink; and, rejoicing like an insect in the center of a bubble in the security of my watery imprisonment, I write this poem.

It is not a drizzle that falls; it is not a languishing and doubtful rain. The rain grips the earth and beats upon it in serried sullenness, with a heavy, powerful assault. How cool it is, oh frogs, to forget the pond in the thickness of the damp grass! No need to fear that the rain is ceasing. It is copious, it is satisfying. He is thirsty indeed, my brothers, for whom this marvelous beaker does not suffice. The earth has disappeared, the house bathes, the submerged trees stream; the very river, which terminates my horizon like the sea, seems drowned. Time has no duration, and, straining my ears not only for the unlocking of each new hour, I meditate the psalm

of the rain, so endless and so neutral in tone. But toward the end of the day the rain ceases, and, while the accumulated clouds prepare for a heavier assault, — as if Iris from the summit of the sky were about to flash straight into the heart of the conflict, — a black spider sways head downward and hung by his rear in the middle of this window which I have opened on the leafage and the walnut-stained North. It is no longer clear. I must strike a light. Meanwhile I shall make to tempests a libation of this drop of ink.

NIGHT ON THE VERANDAH

CERTAIN redskins believe that the souls of still-born children live in the shells of winkles. I am listening tonight to the uninterrupted chorus of tree-frogs, like childish elocution, like a plaintive recitation of little girls, like an ebullition of vowels.

I have long studied the ways of the stars. Some move singly, others mount in squadrons. I have recognized the "Doors" and the "Three Ways." As the clearest space gains the zenith, Jupiter with pure greenish brilliance moves forth like a golden calf. The position of the stars is not left to chance. The interplay of their distances gives me the proportions of the void. Their swing participates in our equilibrium, vital rather than mechanical. I feel their oscillations beneath my feet.

Arriving at the last of these ten windows, the mystic secret consists in surprising at the opposite window, across the shadowy, uninhabited room, another fragment of the heavenly chart.

No intrusion will derange your dreams, and no celestial glances into your chamber will disquiet your repose, if before going to bed you are careful to arrange this great mirror before the night. Since the earth presents such a wide sea to the stars, it must also render itself liable to their influence and spread its deep ocean beneath them like a photographic developing bath.

The night is so calm that it seems to me embalmed.

THE SPLENDOR OF THE MOON

BY this key which rids me of the world, opening to my blindness a muffled door; by this irresistible drifting away, by the mysterious sweetness which animates me and the deep response of my own heart to a soft explosion of mysterious sounds, I realize that I am asleep, and I awaken.

I had left my four windows open to the dark and somber night; and now, going out on the verandah, I see all the depth of space filled with thy light, oh sun of dreams! Far from disturbing sleep, this fire rising from the midst of darkness creates it, overpowering my senses more profoundly. But not in vain, like a priest awakened for his midnight mass, have I come from my bed to survey this mysterious mirror. The light of the sun is a force of life and of creation, and our vision partakes of its energy; but the splendor of the moon is like thought meditating upon itself. I contemplate her alone, lost to sound and heat; and all creation paints itself black beneath her brilliant expanse.

What solemn orgies! Long before the morning, I contemplate the image of the world. And already yonder great tree has flowered. Straight and alone, like an immense white lilac; bride of the night, it trembles all dripping with light. Oh star of after-midnight! Not the pole-star at the dizzy zenith, nor the red fire of the Bull, nor that planet which is revealed by a moving leaf, clear topaz in the heart of yonder dark tree, — none of these do I choose as queen, but high above them that farthest star lost in infinite light, that my eye acclaims in accord with my heart, and recognizes only to see it disappear.

DREAMS

AT night, on your way to listen to music, take care to have a lantern for your return! Shod in white, be careful not to lose sight of either of your shoes; for fear that, having once confided the sole of your foot to an invisible path through the fog, an unknown road does not lead you hopelessly astray and the dawn find you entangled in the top of a flagstaff or clinging to the corner of a temple wall as a bat does upon the head of a chimera.

Seeing this stretch of white wall lit by the intense fire of the moon, the priest did not hesitate, by means of his rudder, to drive his little boat against it; and in the morning a bare, bright sea betrayed nowhere any trace of his oar.

The fisher, having digested this long day of silence and melancholy — the sky, the fields, three trees, and the water — has not prolonged expectation so vainly that nothing is taken by his bait. To his very marrow he feels (with the clutch of his fish-hook) the swift tension of his rigid line, which,

cutting the glassy surface, draws him toward black depths. A leaf, twirling over, does not ripple the transparence of the pool.

Who knows where you would not be liable some day to discover the mark of your hand and the seal of your thumb, if each night before sleeping you would take care to smear your fingers with a thick black ink?

Moored to the outer opening of my chimney, a canoe, hanging almost vertical, awaits me. Having finished my work, I am invited to take tea in one of those islands which cross the sky in the direction East Southwest.

With its clustered buildings and the warm tones of its marble walls, the locality resembles a city in Africa or in Italy. The system of drainage is perfect, and on the terrace where we are seated one enjoys pure air and a most extended view. Unfinished buildings, ruined wharves, the foundations of crumbling bridges, surround this cyclad on all sides.

Since the jetty of yellow mud where we live has been embraced by this pearly expanse, — from an inundation whose progress I survey each evening from the ramparts,

— all illusion and enchantment mount up to me. It is in vain that the barges come unceasingly from the other side of the lagoon, carrying us earth to strengthen our crumbling embankments. What faith I had in these green fields, road-divided, to which the farmer would not hesitate to confide his seeds and his labor! And then one day, on ascending the wall, I saw them replaced by these waters the color of the dawn. Only a village emerges here and there, a tree drowned to the branches; and, at this place where a yellow gang was digging, I see boats as close together as eyelashes. But also I read menaces in this too-beautiful evening! No stronger than an ancient precept against voluptuousness is this ruined wall, where the miserable soldiers who guard the gates announce the night by blasts from trumpets four feet long. It cannot defend our black factories and warehouses, filled with hides and tallow, against the night and against the irresistible spread of these rose-colored and azure waters; for an oncoming wave will sweep me from my feet and carry me away, lifting me up beneath the arms.

And again I see myself at the highest fork of an old tree in the wind, a child bal-

anced among the apples. From there, like a god on his pinnacle, spectator of the theater of the world, I study with deep consideration the relief and conformation of the earth, its disposition of slopes and planes. With the piercing eye of a crow I peer up and down the country spread out under my perch. I follow this road which, appearing twice on the brow of little hills, finally loses itself in the forest. I miss nothing: the direction of smoke, the qualities of shadow and of light, the progress of the farmwork, a wagon which lurches along the road, the shots of the hunters. No need of a paper wherein I could only read the past! I have only to climb to this branch, and, across the wall, all the present is before me. The moon rises. I turn my face toward her, bathed with light in this house of fruits. I remain motionless, and from time to time an apple from the tree falls like a ripe and heavy thought.

HEAT

TODAY is more arduous than the Inferno. Out of doors is an overpowering sun. A blinding splendor devours all the shade, a splendor so steady that it seems solid. I see in everything around me less of immobility than of stupor, an arrested effort. For the earth in these four moons has completed her production. It is time that her spouse kill her, and, unveiling the fire with which he burns, condemn her with an inexorable kiss.

As for me, what shall I say? Ah, if this flaming heat is frightful to my frailty, if my eye turns away, if my body sweats, if I sink on my knees, I will blame this inert flesh; but the virile spirit will soar free in an heroic transport! I feel it, my soul hesitates, but nothing less than the supreme can satisfy this exquisite and terrible jealousy. Let others hide under the earth, obstructing with care the least fissure in their buildings; but a sublime heart, pressed against the sharpness of love, will embrace fire and torture. Sun, re-

double thy flames! It is not enough to burn, — consume! My sorrow would be not to suffer enough. May nothing impure escape from the furnace, no blindness from the torture of the light!

THE VISION OF A CITY

AT the hour when, urged by an exalted foreboding, such a man as I, wifeless and childless, reaches the level of the setting sun; as he attains the mountain's crest high above the earth and its people, he sees the mysterious representation of a splendid city hanging enormous in the sky. It is a city of temples.

In modern cities we see the streets and the different quarters crowd and center about various markets and exchanges, schools and municipal buildings, whose high pinnacles and distributed masses stand out above the uniform roofs; but here the poised image of an eternal city, built by the evening in the form of a triple mountain, discloses not a single earthly detail, and shows nothing in the infinite ramification of its construction and the type of its architecture which is not appropriate to the sublime service it renders, although accomplished without preparation or practise.

And as the citizen of a kingdom, whose road leads to the capital, seeks to understand the plan of the immense place; so

the contemplative, gazing at Jerusalem, fearing to enter it with soiled sandals, studies the interpretation of its laws, and the conditions of a sojourn there. Not a nave, not a single plan of cupola or portico, but responds to the observances of a cult; not a movement or a detail of stairs and terraces is disregarded in the development of ceremony. The moats of towers, the superimposition of walls, the basilicas, circuses, and reservoirs, — and even the tree-tops in the square gardens, — are molded of the same snow; and the violet tinge of their shadows is perhaps only such a color of mourning as irreparable distance adds.

Thus one evening a solitary city appeared for an instant before me.

DESCENDING THE RIVER

WELL, let these men continue to sleep! May the boat not yet arrive at its port! Thus shall my misery be made to hear my last word, or I at least have said it.

Emerging from a night's sleep, I am awakened in flames.

So much beauty compels my laughter. What splendor, what brilliance! What a wealth of inextinguishable color! It is Aurora. Oh God, how much refreshment this blue has for me! How tender the green is, how cool; and, looking toward the furthest heaven, what peace to see it still so dark that the stars twinkle there!

But how well you know, my friend, where to turn and what awaits you, if, on lifting your eyes, you need not blush to behold this heavenly brightness! Oh may it indeed be this color which I am given to contemplate! Not red, and not the color of the sun, it is the fusing of blood in gold. It is life consummated in victory. It is the perpetual renewal of youth in eternity.

The thought that this is only the day arising does not diminish my exaltation in the least; but the thing that embarrasses me like a lover, that makes me tremble through my whole body, is the intention hidden in such glory. It is my admission to it, it is my progress toward meeting with this joy.

Drink, oh my heart, of these inexhaustible delights!

What do you fear? Do you not see how the current, accelerating the movement of our boat, leads us on? Why doubt that we shall arrive, and that endless day will respond to the brightness of such a promise? I foresee that the sun will rise, and that I must prepare to sustain its power. Oh light, drown all transitory things in the depth of thy abyss!

Let noon come, and it will be vouchsafed me to meditate, Summer, upon thy reign, and to include the whole day in my perfected joy, as I sit amid the peace of all the earth in the harvest solitudes.

THE BELL

WHILE the air is rejoicing in perfect stillness, at the hour when the sun is consummating the mystery of noon, then the great bell, with its sonorous and concave expanse swung to the point of melody by the blows of its cedarn hammer, rings with the rolling earth; and soon its sound, receding and advancing, has crossed mountain and plain until a wall which one can see on the far horizon, with a series of Cyclopean doors piercing it at symmetrical intervals, hems in the volume of its resounding thunder and forms the frontier of its clamor. In one corner of this enclosure a city is built. The rest of the place is occupied by fields, woods, and tombs; and here and there, under the shadow of sycamores, the vibrations of a bronze gong far within a pagoda deflect the echoes of the monster as they die away.

I have seen, near the observatory where Kangchi went to study the stars of old age, the pavilion where the bell resides under the guard of an old *bonze*, honored by offerings and inscriptions. The out-

stretched arms of an average man are the measure of its width. I knock with a finger upon its surface, which sings through a six-inch thickness at the least shock. For a long time I lend an ear. And I recall the history of the molder.

That cord of silk or catgut should resound under the curve of the bow, that wood, having been instructed by the winds, should lend itself to music, — in these phenomena the artisan found nothing singular; but to attack the very element, to extort the musical scale from primitive soil, seemed to him the means of properly making Man resonant and awakening his clay. So his art was the casting of bells.

His first bell was carried up to heaven in a storm. The second, when they had loaded it on a boat, fell into the deep and muddy waters of the Kiang. The man resolved to make a third before he died, and this time he wished to gather into one deep vessel the soul and the whole voice of the nourishing and productive earth, and pack into one thunderous vibration the fulness of all sound. This was the plan that he conceived, and the day that he commenced his enterprise, a daughter was born to him.

Fifteen years he labored at this work.

But it was in vain that, having conceived the idea of his bell, he planned with a subtle art the dimensions, curves, and caliber; or that, having extracted from the most secret metals whatever listens and trembles, he made sheets so sensitive that they would vibrate at the mere approach of a hand; or that, from a sonorous instrument placed among them, he deeply studied properties and harmonies. When a pure and faultless bell had issued from the mold of sand, the copper side would never respond the expected answer to his interrogation; or, if the double beat balanced itself in even intervals, it was his misery never to feel life in them, — that indefinable mellowness and moisture which is given to words formed in the human mouth.

Meanwhile the girl grew with her father's despair; and, when she saw that the old man was consumed by his mania and no longer searched for new alloys, but threw into his crucibles blades of wheat and the sap of aloes, and milk and the blood from his own veins, — then a great pity was born in the heart of the maiden, for which women come to the bell today to venerate her image of painted wood. Having said her prayer to the subterranean god, she clothed herself in wedding garments; and,

like a dedicated victim, having fastened a stalk of straw about her neck, she threw herself into the molten metal. So the bell was given a soul; and the resounding elementary forces gained this feminine, virginal grace, and the ineffable liquid note.

Then the old man, having kissed the still warm bronze, struck it powerfully with his mallet; and so lively was the invasion of joy at the perfection he heard, and the victory of its magnificence, that his heart languished within him; and, sinking upon his knees, he could not keep from dying.

Since then, and since the day when a city was born of its widespread summons, the metal has cracked and gives only a dying echo of its former self. But the wise, with a vigilant heart, still hear at the break of day, when a faint, cold wind comes from skies the color of apricots and of hop-flowers, the first bell — in the celestial spaces — and, at the somber set of sun, the second bell — in the depths of the immense and muddy Kiang.

THE TOMB

ON the pediment of the funereal portal I read an order to alight. On my right are some broken statues in the reeds, and an inscription on a formidable pillar of black granite gives with wearisome detail the laws relating to sepulchers; half obliterated by moss a threat forbids the breaking of vases, loud cries, or the spoiling of ceremonial basins.

It is certainly later than two o'clock, because I see that the dim, round sun is already a third of the way down a dull and lurid sky. I can only mount straight onward, to survey the arrangement of the cemetery; and, preparing my heart, I start out on the road the funerals follow across this home of the dead, in itself lifeless. First come, one after another, two square mountains of brick. Their hollow centers open by four arches on the four points of the compass. The first of these halls is empty. In the second a giant tortoise of marble, so high that I can scarcely reach his mustached head with my hand, supports a panegyric column.

"This is the porch and apprenticeship of the earth," I thought. "Here Death halted between the double thresholds, and here the master of the world received supreme homage between the four horizons and the sky."

But scarcely have I gone out by the Northern door (it is not vainly that I leap this rivulet!) than I see open out before me the country of the shades.

Forming an avenue of alternate couples, monstrous animals appear before me, facing each other, successively repeated kneeling and standing in pairs; rams, horses, unicorns, camels, elephants; until, at the turning where the last of the procession disappears, these enormous and ugly shapes loom out against the straggling grass. Further off are ranged civil and military mandarins. These stones are sent to ceremonial funerals in the place of animals and men; and, as the dead have crossed the threshold of life, it would not be suitable to give closer likenesses to such replicas.

Here, where this large cairn — hiding, they say, the treasures and bones of a very ancient dynasty — ceases to bar the passage, the way turns toward the East. I am walking now among soldiers and ministers. Some are intact and standing, others

lie on their faces. One warrior without a head still clasps the hilt of a sword in his fist. By a triple-arched bridge the path crosses the second canal.

Now, by a series of stairs where the central hand-rail still shows the imperial dragon, I cross the ravaged site of terraces and courts. These are the walks of Memory, the fugitive traces of lives which, leaving the earth, serve only to enrich it by decay; the steps of sacrifices, the awful garden where what is destroyed attests its whilom existence in the presence of what still remains. In the center a throne supports, a baldachin still shelters, the inscription of a dynasty. All about, temples and guest-houses have become a confused rubbish among the briars.

And the tomb is before me.

Between massive projections of the square bastions which flank it, behind the deep-cut channel of the third stream, is a wall which assures us that the end of our journey must be here. A wall and nothing but a wall, a hundred feet high and two hundred feet wide. Eroded by the use of centuries, the inexorable barrier presents a blind face of masonry. A single round hole shows in the center of the base, the mouth of an oven or the oubliette of a dungeon. This

wall forms the front of a sort of trapezoid formation, detached from the mountain which overhangs it. A low molding, ending beneath an overhanging cornice, stands out from the wall like a console. No corpse is so suspect as to require such a mass being placed upon him. This is the throne of Death itself, the regal exaltation of sepulture.

A straight alley, remounting the sloping plain, crosses a level plateau. At the end there is only the same mountain whose steep slope conceals in its depths the ancient Ming.

And I understand that this is the sepulcher of the Atheist. Time has scattered the vain temples and laid the idols in the dust, and only the arrangement of the place remains, with the idea it expressed. The pompous catafalques on the threshold have not been able to retain the dead. The cortège of his vanished glory cannot retard him. He crosses the three rivers, he traverses the manifold courts filled with incense; nor is the monument that has been prepared for him sufficient to hold him. He cleaves his way further, and enters into the very body and bones of primitive earth. It is merely an animal interment, the mixing of crude flesh with

inert and compact clay. The king and peasant are forever consolidated into this death without a dream or an awakening.

But the shadow of evening spreads over this cruel place. Oh ruins, the tomb has survived you! And the brutal stolidity of this bulk is a perfect symbol of death itself.

As I return among the colossal statues of stone, I see in the dried grass the decaying corpse of a horse, which a dog is tearing. The beast looks at me as he licks the blood which trickles down his chops; then, applying his paws again to the red carcass, he tears off a long strip of flesh. The mangled remains are spread about.

THE MELANCHOLY WATER

THERE is an intelligence in joy, I admit it. There is a vision in laughter. But that you may comprehend, my friend, this medley of blessedness and bitterness which the act of creation includes, now that the melancholy season begins I shall explain to you the sadness of water.

The same tear falls from the sky that overflows from the eyelid. Do not think to accuse the cloud of your melancholy, nor this veil of vague showers. Shut your eyes; listen! The rain falls.

Nor does the monotony of this constant sound suffice to explain it.

It is a weary mourning whose cause is within itself. It is the self-absorption of love; it is the effort in labor. The heavens weep over the fruitful earth. Not only Autumn, and the future fall of fruit whose seed she nourishes, draws these tears from the wintry cloud. Sorrow is in the Summer; in the flower of life is the blossoming of death.

At the moment when the hour before noon is ended, as I descend into the valley filled

with the murmur of various fountains, I pause enchanted by the gloom. How abundant are these waters! And if tears, like blood, have their perpetual source in us, how refreshing it is, listening to this liquid choir of voices, deep or shrill, to harmonize from them all the shades of grief! There is no passion but could borrow of your tears, oh fountain! And since the brightness of this single drop, falling from on high into the basin upon the image of the moon, satisfies my particular desire, not in vain shall I have learned to love your sanctuary through many dreamy afternoons, oh sorrowful valley!

I return to the plain. On the doorsill of his hut, — where, in the inner darkness, gleams a candle lit for some rustic fête, — a man sits, holding in his hand a dusty cymbal. It rains heavily. In the midst of this damp solitude, I hear only the cry of a goose.

THE NIGHT VOYAGE

I HAVE forgotten why I undertook this voyage, and what matter I was to negotiate, as Confucius did when he went to carry his doctrine to the Prince of Ou. Seated all day in the depths of my varnished cabin, my urgency, on these calm waters, does not outrun the swanlike progress of the little boat. Only occasionally in the evening I come out to look at the aspect of the country.

Our winter here has no severity. Season dear to the philosopher, these bare trees, this yellow grass, sufficiently attest the passing of the time, without atrocious cold or unnecessary violence. In this twelfth month, cemeteries and kitchen gardens, and a country mounded everywhere with tombs, spread out in dull productivity. The clumps of blue bamboo, the somber pines above the sepulchers, the gray-green reed-grass, arrest and satisfy one's gaze. The yellow flowers of the New Year's Candlestick and the waxen berries of the Soot Tree give a real beauty to the

somber picture. I proceed in peace across this temperate region.

Now it is night. It would be vain to wait, stationed in the bow of this junk, for the reflection of our wooden anchor to trace on the beatified water the image of that waning moon which only midnight holds for us. All is dark; but as we move on, propelled by the scull which steers our prow, we need not fear mistaking our way. These canals permit of numberless detours. Let us pursue the voyage with tranquillity, our eyes on yonder solitary star.

THE HALT ON THE CANAL

NOW, — passing the place where old men and women congregate, driven from their far-off villages by the need of food, and traveling on rafts made of their house-doors, guided by the domestic duck, — encountering waters which seem as if they were flooded with rice, that they may fitly enter into a region of opulence; pushing across this large and rectilinear canal which bounds the rude high wall enclosing the city and its people, where the exaggerated arch of a bridge frames with evening the crenelated tower of a gate opening on the dark countryside; by the wharf we tie up our boat among square stone tombs in the grass, the crude material of epitaphs.

With day our investigation begins. We become entangled in a maze of Chinese streets, murky and moist with domestic odors. For a long time we follow the narrow foot-path in the turmoil of the market-place, in the midst of a people mixed in with their dwellings as bees are with their wax and honey. I recall a little girl winding a skein of green silk, a barber cleaning the

ear of his client with a fine pincer like the antennæ of a crawfish; a little donkey turning a millstone near an oil warehouse, the dark quiet of a pharmacy within whose depths, through the gilded frame of a moon-shaped door, two red candles flame before the name of the apothecary. We traverse many courts, more than a hundred bridges.

Winding through narrow alleys bordered by great sepia-colored walls, we reach the richer quarter. If these closed doors should open to us, they would show vestibules flagged with stone, a reception hall with its large bed-table, a little peach-tree flowering in a pot, and smoky passages whose rafters are hung with hams and bundles. Hidden behind this wall, in a little court we find a monster of a wisteria plant. Its hundred creepers interlace, interweave, tie themselves in knots, and twine into a kind of manifold, tortuous cable, which, thrusting out its woody, serpentine length on all sides, spreads over the trellis, hiding its trench in a thick sky of mauve clusters. Let us traverse the ruins of this long suburb where naked men are weaving silk in the débris. We shall gain a deserted space which occupies the south side of the enclosure.

Here, they say, was formerly the imperial residence; and in fact the triple grating and quadruple framework of the consecutive doors bar, with their granite outlines, the wide flagged road on which we walk. The enclosure contains nothing but rank herbage; and, — at the place where the "Four Ways" meet, which diverge toward the four cardinal points under triumphal arches, — with an inscription like a map displayed to the whole Kingdom, the imperial stele, defaced by the fissures in its marble, slants on the decapitated tortoise which is its base.

The Chinese show everywhere representations of that inherent emptiness whose necessity they emphasize. "Let us honor," says the *Tao teh King*, "Vacuity, which gives to the wheel its utility and to the lute its harmony!" These ruins and these fallow tracts which are found in the same enclosure close to the densest multitudes, these sterile mountains shouldering the most meticulous culture, and the wide expanse of the cemeteries, do not impress the mind with a false idea; for, in the density and mass of this coherent people, administration and justice, religion and monarchy, disclose by contrasts no less strange the same yawning vacancy of vain phantoms and ruins.

China is not, like Europe, elaborated into compartments. No boundaries, no special statutes, oppose any resistance throughout her immense area to the spread of her surging humanity. That is why, powerless as is the sea to foresee its agitations, this nation which can only be saved from destruction by its plasticity, shows everywhere, like Nature itself, an antique and provisory aspect, — unstable, full of hazards, possibilities, and deficiencies. The present always contains the influences of the past and the future. Man has not made an absolute conquest of the soil, a final and methodical arrangement. The multitude still graze upon grass.

Suddenly a lugubrious cry overwhelms us! The guardian of the enclosure, at the foot of one of the gates designed like an upright letter which frame the field, sounds on the long Chinese trumpet; and we see the horn of thin brass quiver under the force of the sound which fills it. Raucous and rumbling, if he declines the trumpet toward the earth; and strident if he lifts it; without inflection and without cadences, the dreary blaring noise culminates in the reverberance of a frightful uproar, — do fa, do fa! The harsh call of a peacock would not startle more the

drowsiness of this abandoned garden. It is the horn of the shepherd, and not the bugle, which speaks and commands. This is not the singing trumpet which leads armies on, — it is the collective voice of beasts; and the herd or the flocks confusedly assemble at its sound. But we are alone; and for nothing living does the Mongol trumpet at this mysterious crossing of the Ways.

When we return to our boat, it is almost night. At sunset, all down the horizon the clouds seem tinted with blue, and on the dim earth the fields of *colzas* shine like blows of light.

THE PINE-TREE

IN Nature, only the tree is upright as man is, and for a symbolic reason.

A man holds himself erect by preserving his balance, and his two arms, hanging at his sides, are no part of his unity. But, though attached to the earth by the collective grasp of its roots, the tree raises itself with an effort; its multifold and divergent parts, spreading out into a fragile and sensitive tissue of leaves, by which it seeks for some support in the very air and light, constitute no mere gesture but the very essential act and condition of its growth.

The family of conifers shows a special characteristic. In them I perceive not only a ramification of the trunk into branches, but also their articulation on a stem that rises straight and single, — an articulation which gradually multiplies into threadlike leaves. The fir-tree is typical of such a class, with the symmetrical intersections of its branches, whose essential plan is simply a perpendicular crossed by a graded series of horizontal lines.

This type includes many variations in the different regions of the world. The most interesting is that of the pines I studied in Japan.

Rather than the rigidity usual to wood, the trunk appears to have a fleshy elasticity. Under the tension on the strong, cylindrical stem of compact fibers, its sheath splits and the rough bark, divided into pentagonal scales, — with deep cracks between them from which resin oozes abundantly, — expands in tough layers. And if, through the suppleness of its jointless body, the trunk yields to the exterior forces which violently assail it or seductively allure it, the tree resists by its inherent energy; and the drama of its pathetic struggle is written in the tormented twisting of its boughs.

Thus, along the tragic old road to Tokkaido, I have seen the pines sustain the onslaught of the powers of the air. In vain the wind of the ocean lays them low. Clinging with every root to the stony soil, the invincible trees writhe, twist upon themselves, and, — like a man braced on all fours, who butts with his head, kicks in all directions, and hunches himself together, — they seem to grapple with the antagonist, to re-establish themselves, and to

straighten up under the Protean assaults of the monster who would overcome them. All along the solemn beach I have passed their heroic lines in review on this somber evening, and watched all the vicissitudes of the battle. One leans backward, and stretches toward the sky a monstrous panoply of halberds and shields which he brandishes in Briarean fists; another, full of wounds, mutilated as by blows of clubs, and bristling on all sides with jagged stumps, still wars and waves a few feeble boughs; another, which seems thrown upon its back, still battling against the dust, maintains itself on the powerful buttress of its gathered haunches; and finally, I saw giants and princes who, massively settling upon their muscular loins, by the reiterated efforts of their Herculean arms, continued to hold their ground on all sides against the tumultuous enemy.

I have still to speak of the foliage.

If I compare to the pines the species of trees that flourish in fertile earth, in rich and mellow soil, I discover these four characteristics in them; that the proportion of leaf to wood is greater; that the leaf is deciduous; that, flattened, it shows an obverse and reverse side; and, finally, that the foliage, growing upon the boughs, diver-

ging from a common center, is arranged like a single bouquet.

The pine grows in dry and stony soil; therefore its absorption of the elements which nourish it is less immediate, and necessitates on its part a stronger and completer elaboration, a greater functional activity,—and, if I may so put it, more personal. As it is limited in its supply of water, it does not expand like a chalice. This one that I observe divides its foliage, spreads a handful on every side. Instead of leaves which receive the rain, these are tufts of little tubes which reach into the surrounding dampness and absorb it. And that is why, — independent of the seasons, sensitive to more continuous and subtle influences, — the pine shows a perennial foliage.

Thus I explain the aerial character of its foliage, fragmentarily suspended. As the pine lends the irregular outline of its boughs to the lines of the harmonious landscape, better to enhance the charm and the brilliancy of Nature, it also spreads everywhere the shadow of its singular tufts; over the power and the glory of Ocean, blue in the sun; over the harvest fields; and obstructing the design of the constellations or the dawn upon the sky. It sweeps its branches beneath azalea bushes

flaming near the surface of lakes blue as gentian, or above the steep embankments of the imperial city, close to the silver, grass-grown waters of the canals; and the evening on which I saw Fuji like a colossus, like a virgin throned in the clarity of the Infinite, the dark tuft of a pine was silhouetted against the dove-colored mountain.

THE ARCH OF GOLD IN THE FOREST

WHEN I left Yeddo the great sun was flaming in the clear sky. Toward the end of the afternoon, arriving at the junction of Utsonomiya, I perceive that a shadow has darkened all the sunset. Composed of huge, heaped-up clouds, it presents that tumultuous and chaotic aspect that a sky sometimes shows when, like the veiled fire of footlights, a gleaming streak on the horizon throws long shadows across the dim fields, bringing out each object in clear relief. Drowsing on the wharf just now, and for a long time in the train moving westward, I have been a spectator of the decline of day and the gradual deepening of darkness. With one glance I have caught the whole plan of the country. In the background, deep forests and the folds of cumbrous mountains; in the foreground, detached foot-paths which bar the way, one behind the other, like spaced and parallel barriers. Where the trenches we follow show us a cross-section of the earth, we see first a fine mold, black as coal; then

yellow sand; and finally clay, red with sulphur or cinnabar. Avernus spreads out before us! Does not this scorching sun, this low sky, this surrounding harshness of volcanoes and fir-trees, correspond to that black abyss from which the visions of dreams arise? Indeed it was with a royal wisdom that the ancient shogun, Ieyasu, chose this place for his disembodied spirit to enter the kingdom of shades, and, by dissolving in silence into their shadows, transmute death into godhead as a temple is created of a tomb.

The forest of cryptomeria is truly a temple.

Often before, at this hour of somber twilight, I had crossed the double avenue of these giant trees, — which extends twenty leagues to conduct from the red bridge the annual ambassador who bears Imperial presents to this ancestral shrine, — but this morning, at the hour when the first rays of the sun turned the banks of somber verdure above me to rose color in the golden wind which swept them, I penetrated into the colossal nave, deliciously filled with a resinous odor, after the cold night.

The cryptomeria belong to the family of pines, and the Japanese have named it *sengui*. It is a very tall tree, whose trunk,

free of twists and knots, maintains an inviolable rectitude. There are no branches, but indicated here and there, as is the way with pines, not by detail and relief but by mass and contour, the leaves float like tatters of black smoke about the mystic pillar; and the forest of these tall trunks, all of the same height, loses itself in the tangled canopy of shadowy, inextricable foliage. The place is simultaneously limitless and confined, filled and empty.

The marvelous houses are scattered among these trees that have been parked for centuries.

I shall not describe the whole plan of the shaded city, though it is marked on my fan to the minutest detail. In the middle of the dedicated forest I have followed enormous avenues that a scarlet *torii* bars. At a bronze basin, under a roof inlaid with the moon, I have filled my mouth with lustral waters; I have climbed the stairs; among many pilgrims I have passed indescribable opulence and space, the entrance to an enclosure that is like a dream formed of a confusion of flowers and birds; barefoot, I have penetrated to its innermost golden heart. I have seen the priests with haughty faces, — with head-dresses of horsehair, and clothed with ample trousers of green silk,

— offer the morning sacrifice to the sound of flute and mouth-organ. And for me the sacred *kagura*, — his face framed in white linen, holding the tasseled bough of the pine devoutly between his hands, — has executed the dance which consists of continual advance and retreat.

As Chinese architecture has for its chief element the baldachin; stories being raised as on the poles of a pastoral tent; so, in Japan, the roofs made of tiles, or those made of a substance as powerful, strong, and light as a thick felt, show but a slight curve; they are no more, in their elegant power, than a cover; and all this construction evolves from the idea of a box.

Since the time when Jingô Tennô conquered the isles of the rising sun with his fleet, the Japanese have everywhere preserved some signs of the sea: the habit of tucking up their clothes to the waist, these low cabins which are their homes under an uncertain sun, the multitude of neat little objects and their careful stowage, the absence of furniture, — do they not all betray the confined life of the sailor on his precarious deck? And these wooden houses are themselves nothing more than the enlarged cabin of a galley, or the box of a palanquin. The extensions, intersected by

carpentry; the oblique shafts, of which the figured heads jut out at four angles; still recall the quality of being portable. Among the columns of the temple, arches seem the means by which it may be lifted.

Houses? Yes. Here the very sanctuary is a house. They have relegated the bones, sealed in a cylinder of bronze, to the high mountainside; but in this room, seated on the unalterable name, the soul of the dead continues a spectral habitation in obscure and secret splendor. Reversing the procedure which employs wood and stone and makes them of value without adding any strange element to their own properties, artifice has existed here only to annihilate its material. These enclosures, the sides of these boxes, these floors and ceilings, are no longer made of beams and planks but of certain opaque images conjured forth. Color decorates and adorns the wood, lacquer drowns it under impenetrable waters, paint covers it with enchantments, sculpture deeply undermines and transfigures it. An end of timber — the least spike appearing on the magic surface — is covered with arabesques and interlacing lines; but, as on screens we see trees in flower and mountains steeped in a radiant glow, these palaces emerge entirely golden.

On the roofs, on the façades, which strike the full light of day, only the ridges are burnished with scattered brightness; but the sides are brightened in vast surfaces through the shadow; and inside also, the six walls of the box are painted with the splendors of hidden treasure, flaming brilliance revealed by numerous mirrors.

Thus the magnificent shogun does not inhabit a house of mere wood, but his dwelling in the center of the forest is in the light of setting suns; and ambrosial incense abides beneath these sweeping boughs. Through the immense spaces of this region, deeply slumbering like a god amid its sea of trees, an occasional dazzling cascade plashes between the leaves, mingling with their ceaseless whisper.

THE PEDESTRIAN

IN June, with a gnarled stick in my hand (like the god Bishamon), I am that mysterious passer-by who crosses the path of groups of simple, ruddy peasants; and, at six in the evening, while the storm-cloud in the sky endlessly continues its monstrous assault on the mountain, I am that lonely man one sees upon this abandoned road.

I am going nowhere in particular. My wanderings are without end and without profit. The itinerary of the soldier or the merchant, the piety of the sterile woman who, with hopeful humility, seven times makes a tour of the holy peak, — these have nothing in common with my travels. The footprint pointed in the usual direction does not allure my own far enough to lead me astray; and soon, urged by the intimacy there is in treading this moss through the heart of the woods, to pick the black leaf of a camellia by the weeping of a secret waterfall, — I flee suddenly, like an awkward deer. Then, amid the silence of grow-

ing things, poised on one foot, I await the echo. How fresh and comic the song of this little bird seems to me! And how the cry of the rooks below delights me! Each tree has its personality, each little beast his part, each voice its place in the symphony; as they say music is comprehended, so I comprehend Nature.

It is like a story of many details, where only the proper names are given. As my walk — and the day — proceeds, I advance also in the development of a philosophy. Already I have discovered with delight that all things exist in a certain accord; and, though believing this secret relationship, by which the blackness of this pine below espouses the clear green of these maples, it is my purified sight only which establishes it; so, because of this restoration of the original design, I call my visit a Revision. I am the Inspector of Creation, the Verifier of all present things. The reality of this world is the cause of my beatitude. In ordinary hours we employ things for their usefulness, forgetting their purer value: that they should exist at all. But when, after a long effort, pushing through branches and briars, I place my hand on the burning shoulder of this heavy rock in the heart of a glade, the entry of

Alexander into Jerusalem is alone comparable to the sublimity of my achievement.

And I go on and on! Each one of us contains in himself the autonomous power of motion by which he moves toward his food and his work. As for me, the even motion of my legs serves to measure for me the intensity of more subtle appeals. The allurement of everything! I feel it in the silence of my soul. I understand the harmony of the world. When shall I surprise its melody?

HERE AND THERE

IN the street called Nihon Bashi, near the merchants of books and lanterns, of embroideries and bronzes, miniature gardens are sold; and, as a studious idler amid this fantastic display, I mentally compare these little fragments of the world. The artists have subtly shown themselves masters of the exquisite laws by which the lines of a landscape are composed, like those of a physiognomy. Instead of drawing nature they reproduce it, constructing their counterfeits from the very elements of the original, which they borrow — as a rule is illustrated by an example. These images are usually exact and perfect replicas. All sorts and kinds of pines, for instance, are offered me to choose from; and their position in the jar, with their height as a scale, proportionately shows the dimensions of their original territory. Here is a rice-field in Springtime; in the distance is a hill fringed with trees (they are made of moss). Here is the sea, with its archipelago and its capes! By the artifice of two stones, one black, one red, and rather worn and porous,

they have represented two islands that appear to be joined together, whose difference in distance is shown only by their different colors, apparently due to the light of the setting sun. And even the many-colored sunset is represented by this bed of motley pebbles covered with the contents of two carafes.

Now, to amplify my thought!

The European artist copies nature according to the sentiment that he has for it. The Japanese imitates it according to the materials with which it furnishes him. One expresses himself, the other expresses nature. One creates, the other mimics. One paints, the other constructs. One is a student; the other, in a way, a master. One reproduces in its detail the spectacle that he surveys with a searching and subtle gaze; the other disengages its law with a flash of the eye, in the freedom of his fancy; and applies it with a scriptural conciseness.

Here the first inspiration of the artist is the material on which he exercises his hand. Good-humoredly, he consults its intrinsic properties, its tints; and, appropriating the soul of the brute thing, he constitutes himself its interpreter. Of all the things that he might say, he expresses only the essential

and significant characteristics; and, merely making a few shy indications here and there, leaves to the paper the task of concealing all those infinite complexities which are implied freely because they are taken for granted. It is a frolic of certitude, it is caprice with restraint; and the underlying idea, snared by such a method of argument, imposes itself upon us with an insidious conviction.

Now, first of all, to speak of Color! We note that the Japanese artist has reduced his palette to a limited number of general and predetermined tones. He understands that the beauty of a color resides less in its intrinsic quality than in its implicit accord with contrasted tones. And because of the unmodified blending of two values laid on in equal quantities, he repairs the omission of the many intermediate shades by the vivacity that he gives to the juxtaposition of the essential notes; calmly indicating one repetition or two. He knows that the value of a tone results more from its position than from its intensity; master of keys, he transposes them as he will. Furthermore, as color is nothing less than the particular homage that all visible things render to the universal light, everything fitly takes its place within the

frame through the power of color, in accord with the theme that the artist has chosen.

But now the roving eye remains fixed; and, instead of contemplating, it interrogates. Color is the passion of matter; it signalizes the participation of each object in the common source of glory. Design expresses the energy proper to each being; his action, his rhythm, his postures. The one makes manifest his relations to space, the other fixes his movement in time. One gives the form, the other gives the sense. And as the Japanese, careless of relief, paints only by contour and mass, the chief characteristic of his design is a schematic stroke. While the tones are in contrast, the lines are in unity; and while the painting is a harmony, the design is an idea; and if the interpretation of this idea comes in a flash of recognition, complete and instantaneous, the design has a satisfactory abstract significance and expresses the idea in all its purity, just as well as might a word made of letters. Each form, each movement, each group furnishes its hieroglyph.

I understand this when I revel among these bundles of Japanese prints. At Shidzuoka, among the ex-votos of the temple, I have seen many admirable examples of

this art. A warrior leaps from the vermilion wood like a frantic exclamation. This prancing or kicking thing is no longer the picture of a horse, but the symbol of his revolt against bondage; a sort of reversed figure 6, equipped with a mane and tail, represents his repose in the grass. Embraces, battles, landscapes, crowds, fitted into a small space, resemble the designs on seals. This man bursts into laughter; and, falling, he no longer seems a man, but immediately becomes his own character in writing.

With horrible and careless crudity, the French or English construct barbarous barracks; pitiless toward the earth they disfigure, concerned only with their expansion, seizing upon all possible space with their eyes, if not with their hands. They exploit a view as they would a waterfall. The Oriental knows enough to flee from vast landscapes, where multifold aspects and divergent lines do not lend themselves to that exquisite co-ordination between the eye and the view which alone makes a sojourn possible for him. His home is not open to all the winds. Choosing a retreat in some peaceful valley, his care is to achieve a perfect location where his view

composes so harmonious a landscape that it is impossible to imagine seeing it otherwise. His eyes furnish him with all the elements of happiness, and he replaces furniture with open windows. Inside, the art of the painter, ingeniously tracing his visions upon a fictitiously transparent window, multiplies the imaginary openings. In the ancient imperial palace that I visited, its magnificent and movable treasures had been carried away, and there remained only the pictorial decorations arranged in a black room, — the familiar visions of its august inhabitant.

The paper dwelling is composed of successive apartments, divided by partitions which slide on moldings. A single theme of decoration has been chosen for each of the series, and it is introduced by screens similar to the wings of a theater. I can prolong or shorten my contemplation at will. I am less the spectator of the painter than his host; each subject is expressed by a choice in harmony with the tone of the paper, a color representing the opposite end of the gamut. It is so at Gosho. An indigo and cream motif suffices for the room called "Freshness and Purity," seeming all filled with sky and water. But at Nijo the imperial habitation is done in gold

alone. Emerging from the matting-covered rafters, painted life-size, crowns of the pine-tree extend their grotesque boughs along the sunlit walls. The Prince, upon his seat, saw only great bands of tawny fire; and his sensation was of floating on the evening sky with awful sunset fires beneath him.

At Shidzuoka, at the time of Rinzainji, I saw a landscape made of colored dust. They had put it under glass, for fear that a breath would blow it away.

Before the golden Buddha in the leaves, time is measured by the burning of a little candle; and in the depth of this ravine, by the dripping of a triple fountain.

Swept away, overthrown in the chaos and turmoil of the incomprehensible sea, lost in the churning abyss, mortal man with all his strength clutches at something that may prove solid in his grasp. That is why he accords the permanence of wood, metal, or stone to the human figure, and makes it the object of his devotion and his prayer. Besides their common names, he gives proper names to the forces of nature; and, by means of a concrete image which symbolizes

them like a syllable, still mysteriously conscious in his abasement of the superior authority of the Word, he calls upon it in his necessities. Thus, like a child who constructs the history of his doll from everything around him, humanity in its memories unites all that it discovers with all that it dreams, and so composes the romance of mythology.

Here beside me is this poor little old woman, who makes her salutation by striking her hands carefully together before a colossal female statue, in whose bosom an ancient prince, when led by a toothache and a dream to honor the skull of an ancestor, inserted the worn sphere after finding it wedged by the jawbone in the roots of a willow. At my right and at my left, all the length of the dark cavern, the three thousand golden Kwannon, each one resembling the others in the embellishment of arms that frame it, are aligned in rows of a hundred, in ranks fifteen deep. A ray of sunlight flickers over this barrier built of goddesses. Seeking the reason for uniformity in this multitude, and from what bulb all these identical stalks have sprung, I find that the worshiper here doubtless wishes a wider sounding-board for his prayers, and imagines that in multiplying

the object of his entreaty he increases its efficacy.

But not for long did the sages rest their eyes on the eyes of these crude likenesses. Having perceived the unity of all things, they found the basis of their philosophy in that fact. Though each individual were transitory and capricious, the richness of the common fund remained inexhaustible. No need that Man should apply his hatchet to the tree, or his cleaver to the rock; in the grain of millet and the egg, alike in the immobility and the convulsions of sun and sea, he found the same principle of plastic energy; and the earth sufficed for the construction of its own idols. Further, admitting that the whole is formed of homogeneous parts; if, to better pursue their analysis, the Sages turned it back upon themselves, they discovered that the fugitive, blameworthy, unjustifiable thing in them was the fact of their presence in the world, — and that the element in them which was free of space and limitless of duration was the very conception they had formed of this contingent character.

If a diabolical fraud had not led them astray at that point, they might have recognized in the harmony of this principle of independent existence (with its main

idea common to all and its expression so varied) a faith similar to that in the Word, which implies a vow — the voluntary restitution of breath to its divine Source. For every creature, born of the impression of Divine Unity upon indeterminate matter, *is* the very acknowledgment that he makes to his Creator, and the expression of the nothingness from which he has been drawn. This is the living, breathing rhythm of the world; where Man, dowered with consciousness and language, has been instituted their priest, to make dedication and offering of them, — and, of his own nothingness united to essential grace, to make a filial gift of himself, through love's most intimate choice.

But these blind eyes refused to recognize unconditional being; and to him whom they call Buddha was it given to perfect the Pagan blasphemy. To return to this comparison of the Word; from the moment that they ignored the object of the discourse, its order and sequence escaped them entirely, and nothing remained but the ravings of delirium. But a horror of that which is not the Absolute is essential to man; and to escape the frightful circle of your vanity, Buddha, you have not hesitated to embrace Nothingness! For instead of explaining all things by their final end,

he searched in himself for their intrinsic principle; and, finding there only nothingness, his doctrine teaches this monstrous communion.

This is the method; that the Sage, — having banished successively from his mind the ideas of form and of space, and the very idea of an idea, — arrives finally at Nothingness, and so enters into Nirvana. And people are awed by this revelation! As for me, I find that to the idea of Nothingness they have added that of Enjoyment. This seems to me the last and most Satanic mystery; the silence of a creature intrenched in its final refusal, the incestuous quietude of a soul seated on its integral difference!

THE SEDENTARY

I LIVE in a corner of the highest story of a square and spacious building. I have placed my bed in the embrasure of the window; and when the evening, like the bride of a god, silently mounts her couch, I lie at full length with my face turned toward the night. From time to time, lifting an eyelid heavy as if in death, my sight has swum in a rose-colored glow. But at this hour, emerging with a long sigh from a sleep as heavy as Adam's, I awaken to a vision of gold. The light tissue of the mosquito netting waves under an ineffable breeze. Here is light purged of heat; and I twist slowly in the delicious coolness. If I put out my bare arm, it seems to me fitting to plunge it to the shoulder in the consistency of this glory, to sink my hand searchingly into the fountain of eternity, as tremulous as its source. I see the magnificent lake of light spread with an irresistible intensity in a sky that is like a concave and liquid basin the color of mulberry leaves. Only the face of the sun, and its insupportable fires, only the mortal

thrust of its rays, can drive me from my bed. I foresee that I shall have to pass the day in fasting and detachment. What water will be pure enough to quench my thirst, to satisfy my heart? From what manner of fruit shall I strip the skin with a golden knife?

But when the sun has reached the zenith, followed by the sea as is a shepherd, and by the races of mankind arising in successive multitudes, — it is noon, and everything that occupies a dimension in space is enveloped by the soul of a fire whiter than lightning. The world is effaced and the seals of the furnace broken; all things have vanished in the heart of this new deluge. I have closed all the windows. Prisoner of the light, I take up the journal of my captivity. And now, with my hand on the paper, I write by the same impulse that moves the silkworm, who spins its thread of the leaf that it devours. Sometimes I stroll through the darkened room, through the dining-room or the parlor; or for a moment I rest my hand on the cover of the organ, in this bare space whose center the work-table fills, standing intrepid and alone. Surrounded by these white streaks that mark the fissures in my prison, I develop the thought of holocaust. Ah,

if it is enviable to dissolve in a flaming embrace, swept away upon a whirlwind with vehement breath, — how much more beautiful the torture of a spirit devoured by light!

And, when the afternoon is filled with this burning softness, by which the evening is preceded, like the sentiment of paternal love; having purified my body and my mind, I remount to the highest room. Seizing an inexhaustible book, I pursue there the study of Being, the definition of person and substance, of qualities and possibilities.

Between two rows of houses, the glimpse of a river terminates my street; the enormous silver current smokes, and great ships with white sails move across the splendid gap with a smooth and superb grace. I see before me the very River of Life whose image I borrowed when a child, to discourse of Morality. But today, stubborn swimmer though I am, I no longer cherish any hope of landing flat on my face among the reeds in the slime of the other bank, under the salutation of the palms, in a silence interrupted only by the cry of a parrot. Although the shrill cascade invites me, drumming upon the gravel behind the fleshy foliage of the magnolia;

although the fabulous boughs are bending beneath their weight of myrobalans and of pomegranates; I will think of them no more — turning my glance to a more angelic science, to this mystic garden which is offered for my enjoyment and my recreation!

THE EARTH VIEWED FROM THE SEA

ARRIVING from the horizon, our ship is confronted by the wharf of the Earth; and the continent, emerging, spreads its immense architecture out before us. In the morning distinguished by one great star, as I mount the gangway the earth's blue apparition appears before my eyes. To defend the sun against the pursuit of the restless ocean, this continent has established the deep-set solidity of its ramparts. Their breaches open into a happy countryside.

For a long time in the full daylight we follow the frontier of another world. Carried along by the trade-winds, our ship veers and rebounds upon the resilient abyss to which it confides its whole weight. I am caught up to the Azure, I am stuck there like a cask. Captive of the infinite, suspended at the intersection of sky and water, I see below me all the somber Earth laid out like a chart — the whole world, humble and enormous! My separation from it is irrevocable. All things are far from me, and only sight connects me with

them. It will never again be vouchsafed me to set my foot on the solid earth, to construct with my hands a dwelling of wood and stone, to eat in peace food cooked at the domestic fire. Soon we will turn our prow toward the shoreless sea; and, under an immense spread of sail, our advance into the midst of eternity will be shown only by our signal lights.

SALUTATION

AND again I am permitted to salute this land similar to Gessen and Canaan. Tonight, as our ship tossed in the wheat-colored moonlight, at the entrance to the river, what a sign the Dog-Star was to me, low beyond the sea; the golden watchman at the foot of a stretch of stars, glowing splendor at the far horizon! These flowing waters having led us into the heart of the countryside, I disembark, and on my road I see below me the image of the round sun repeated in the fields, ruddy in the green rice.

It is neither cold, nor too warm. All nature has the warmth of my body. How the feeble cry of these crickets touches me! At this end of the season, in this testamentary moment, the union of the sky and the earth (less sacramental today than it is amorous) consummates the matrimonial solemnity.

O cruel destiny! Is repose always apart from me? Is there no peace for the heart of man? A spirit born for one only joy can pardon no delay. Absolute possession

some day will not dry my tears! No joy of mine will be sufficient to make reparation for the bitterness of this grief.

And I will salute this earth; not only with a frivolous jet of intricate phrases, but with the sudden discovery in me of an immense discourse circling the foot of the mountain like that sea of wheat crossed by a triple river. Like that plain and its roads, I fill the space between the mountains. With both eyes lifted toward the eternal mountains, I salute the venerable body of the earth. Through the air I no longer see its mere semblance, but its very flank, the gigantic assemblage of its limbs. O borders of the slope all about me! It is through you that we receive the waters of the sky, and you are the recipients of the Offering!

This damp morning, at the turn of the road between the tomb and the tree, I saw the somber and enormous hill barred at the foot by the flashing line of a river, which stood out like a stream of milk in the light of noon.

Like a body sinking through water of its own weight, during these four motionless hours I have been advancing to the heart of the light, feeling a divine resistance. I am holding myself erect in perfectly white

air. While I cast no shadow, I am celebrating the orgy of the maturity of day.

No longer, under the sudden brilliance of a greedy sun, does the earth burst into violent flowering. Lustral moment! A continual breath blows to us from between the Orient and the North. The opulent harvest, the trees weighed down with their burdens, stir ceaselessly under the soft irresistible wind. The fruits of the great earth are stirred in the purifying splendor. The sky is no longer high above us; brought low, it submerges and damps us. I, a new Hylas (like one who watches fishes below him suspended in watery spaces) see through this milkiness, this silver wherein I am drowned, a dazzling white bird with a pink throat flash into sight and lose itself in a brilliance that my eye cannot sustain.

The whole day does not exhaust my salutation. At the somber hour, — when the wedding procession, armed with flaming torches, conducts the bridal carriage through the forest of orange trees, with all my being I lift applause and acclamation toward the red Sign I see upraised above the wild circle of flaming mountains.

I salute the threshold, the material evidence of Hope, the recompense of man uncompromised; I lift my hands toward this

exposition of the color of life! Autumnal triumph, the foliage above my head is thick with little oranges! But once again my gaze, which has been uplifted toward Death from infancy, must return to mankind; like the singer who, with parted lips, waits to carry on his part — his heart lost in the beat of the music, his eye on his score.

THE HANGING HOUSE

BY a subterranean stairway I descend to the hanging house. Just as the swallow fashions her shelter with patience, between the planks and the rafter, and the seagull glues her nest like a pannier to the rock; so, by a system of clamps, bolts, and girders driven into the stone, the wooden box that I inhabit is solidly attached to the arch of an enormous porch hollowed in the mountain itself. A trap-door arranged in the floor connects me with the world; by means of it on both these days, letting my little basket drop at the end of a cord, I have drawn it up filled with a little rice, some roasted pistachio nuts, and vegetables pickled in brine. In a corner of the formidable masonry, like a trophy made of Medusa's tresses, hangs a fountain whose inexhaustible lament is carried away in a whirlpool. I draw up the water I need by means of a cord knotted in open meshes, and the smoke of my cooking mingles with the spray of the cascade.

The torrent is lost among the Palms, and I see below me the crowns of the great trees from which they draw sacerdotal perfumes. And, as a shattering of crystal

is enough to disturb the night, all the keyboard of the earth is awakened by this neutral, hollow jingling of rain on that deep flint.

I see in the monstrous niche where I am ensconced the very tympanum of the massive mountain, like an ear hollowed in the temporal rock. And, collecting all my attention, bending all my joints, I will attempt to hear, above the murmur of leaves and birds, those sounds which this enormous and secret pavilion undoubtedly gives access to: the oscillations of the universal waters, the shifting of geological strata, the groans of the hurtling earth under an effort contrary to gravitation.

Once a year the moon rises at my left above this escarpment, cutting the shadows at the height of my waist on so exact a level that, with ever so little more delicacy and precaution, I could float a plate of copper upon it. But I like best the last step of the stairway, which descends into the void. Many times I have awakened from meditation, bathed in the dews of the night like a rose-bush; or, in the comfortable afternoon, I have appeared to throw handfuls of dry letches like little red bells to the monkeys perched below me on the furthest branches.

THE SPRING

THE crow, adjusting one eye on me as the clock-maker does on his watch, would see me, a precise, miniature person — a cane like a dart between my fingers — advancing by the straight footpath, moving briskly along.

The country, between the mountains that enclose it, is as flat as the bottom of a frying-pan. To right and left the work of harvesting goes on; they shear the earth as if it were a sheep. I dispute the width of the path, and my place on it, with an uninterrupted file of workers; those who are going to the fields, spade at belt; those who are returning, bending like scales under the weight of double baskets whose form is at once round and square, joining the symbols of the earth and the sky.

I walk a long time; the open air is as close as a room, the sky is somber, and the long columns of stagnant smoke are stationary like the remains of some barbaric pyre. I leave the shorn rice-fields and the harvest-fields of slime; and, little by little, I mount the narrowing gorge. Useless

reeds succeed the fields of sugar-cane; and three times, with shoes in hands, I cross the rapid waters gathered into the current of a river. I have undertaken to find the source of one of these streams that feed the river, here, where it arises in the heart of a five-gorged valley. The ascent becomes more difficult as the thread of the cascade extends. I leave beneath me the last field of potatoes, and, all at once, I have entered into a wood like that which on Parnassus served for the assembly of the Muses! All about me the tea-plants lift their distorted shoots and their dry, somber foliage, — so high that my stretched hand cannot reach it. Charming retreat! Quaint and mysterious shadow, enameled with a perpetual flowering! A delicate perfume, which seems to survive rather than emanate, flatters the nostril while recreating the spirit. And in a hollow I discover the spring! Like grain out of a furious hopper the water from beneath the earth bursts forth, leaping and bubbling. Impurities are absorbed. Only that which is pure, untainted at the source, leaps out. Born of the roseate sky (gathered in what profound matrix!) the virgin water, with living force, pours from the opening like a cry. Happy those from whom a new word

bursts with violence! May my mouth be supplied forever like this spring, — which, sustained by a perpetual, solitary renewal, cares not that it must serve for the works of Man, — for those lowlands where, spreading wide and inundating the tilth, it will nourish the vast, stagnant harvest-fields.

THE TIDE AT NOON

WHEN the time comes that he can sail no longer, the mariner makes his home near the sea; and when it moans he rises to watch, unable to sleep longer; like a nurse who hears a little child complain in the night.

I do likewise, and, by the living virtue of the sea in my blood, my mind communicates with the movement of the waters as does a city by its secret drains.

While I am speaking or writing, resting or eating, I participate in the sea, which rises toward or recedes from me. And often at noon, temporary citizen of this commercial coast, I gaze on what the tide brings us: the tribute of the ocean gathered into this flowing channel in one wide current of yellow water.

I observe the approach of all the people of the sea, the procession of ships towed by the tide as if on the chain of a barge, the junks with their four bulging sails as smooth and stiff as blades, in a puff of wind. Those from Foutchéou carry an enormous fagot of beams lashed to each side; then,

among a scattering of tricolored sampans, come the giants of Europe, the American sailing ships full of gasoline; all the "camels" of Madian, all the cargoes of Hamburg and London, all the carriers of the Coast and the Islands.

The air is very clear. I enter into a light so pure that neither my secret conscience, it seems, nor my body, offer resistance to it. It is deliciously cool. With closed mouth, I breathe the sunlight, my nostrils open to the exhilarating air. Meanwhile noon sounds from the tower of the Customs; the ball of the semaphore drops, all the boats mark off the hour, cannon thunder, the Angelus rings its part, the whistles of the factories mingle with the long tumult of the siren.

All humanity gathers together to eat; the sampan man at the stern of his skiff, lifting a wooden cover, surveys with a contented eye the simmering of his stew. The wharf-hands, tied up in thick bundles of rags, each yoke carried over the shoulder like a pike, surround the open-air kitchen; those who are already served, all laughing, seated on the edges of the wheelbarrows, with bowls of smoking rice between their hands, test the heat with the ends of their greedy tongues.

The regulator of Life's level rises; all the sluices of the earth are filled; the rivers suspend their course; and the sea, mingling her salt with their sands, joins them, to drink fully at their mouths. It is the hour of plenitude. Now the tortuous canals which cross the city become long serpents of close-packed barges advancing amid vociferations; and the irresistible waters, in their expansion, float bridges of boats and dead bodies from the mud, like corks.

AS I cannot eat, I remount to the poop, a piece of bread in my pocket; and, staggering, deafened, blown about, I join in the wild darkness and the indescribable confusion of noise. In this void, opening my lips, I carry a mouthful blindly to them. Soon, leaving the binnacle, little by little I can make out the form of the ship, and beyond, just at the limit of the contracted horizon, the sea in the clutches of the wind. In that black circle, I see the pale charging cavalry of the foam.

Nowhere about me is there solidity. I stand amid chaos. I am lost in the inner caverns of Death. My heart is grasped by the bitterness of the last hour. This is no menace brandished at me; it is simply that I have intruded into the uninhabitable. I am of no importance. I am voyaging through an indifferent element. I am at the mercy of the moods of the deep, of the mind, of the powers of the abyss. In the cataclysm that surrounds me, no compact holds; and the handful of human souls which this narrow vessels contains,

may be scattered over the waters like a basket of bran. A delicate balance sustains me on the bosom of this abyss which is ready to join with my own weight and engulf me.'

To escape this disheartening sight, I go to my cabin and to bed. Head to the wind, the boat lifts to the surge; and every once in a while the enormous hull, with its iron plate and boilers, its armament and storerooms filled with coal and projectiles, settles back upon the waves like a rider who gathers himself, gripping tightly with his knees, before a leap.

Then a little calm comes, and below me I hear the screw continue its feeble and homely sound.

But before the day which follows is ended, our ship enters the lonely port enclosed like a reservoir by a mountain range. Here is Life again! Touched with an artless joy, I may resume my survey of the brisk and lively spectacle, of the spontaneous play of common interests, of this assiduous, multifold, intermingled activity by which all things exist together.

Just as we drop anchor, the sun, through a gap in the mountains which hide it, shoots toward the earth four jets of fire so intense that they seem emissions of its

very substance. Before raising them vertically to the illimitable sky, this king, appearing upon the highest ridge (Eye of our eyes, in the merciful possession of the Vision made visible!) makes, at this supreme hour, a majestic exposition of distance and origin. For a welcome I have this farewell, richer than a promise! The mountain is vestured in rose and violet, the marriage of light and night. I am overcome with a deep, strong sweetness. I lift to God my gratitude still to be alive, and my whole being expands in the realization of my reprieve.

This time I shall not drink the bitter waters!

ON LIGHT

I DO not think — I entirely reject the idea that colors constitute the first element, and that the sun is only the synthesis of their spectrum. I cannot see that the sun may be white, and that each color gives a share of its own virtue to it, and that their accord determines it. There is no color without an extrinsic support; from which we learn that it is itself an exterior thing, the diverse witness that matter renders to the pure source of indivisible splendor. Do not pretend to separate light; since it is light which divides darkness, producing seven notes according to the intensity of its effort. A vase of water or a prism, by the interposition of a transparent and thick medium and the refractive play of facets, allows us to watch this in the act. The free direct ray remains invariable, but color appears as soon as there is a captured refraction, which matter takes to itself as an especial attribute. The prism, in the calculated dispersive powers of its three angles and the concerted

action of its dihedral triple mirror, encloses all possible play of reflections, and restores to the light its *equivalent in color.* I compare light to a woven substance, — where the rays constitute the warp, and where the wave of color, always implying a repercussion, is the woof. Color is nothing more than that.

If I examine the rainbow or the spectrum projected on a wall, I see a gradation in the nature of the tints, as well as in their relative intensity. Yellow occupies the center of the spectrum and permeates it to each edge, where the outer tones exclude it by degrees of obscuration. We can understand it to be the most immediate veil of light, while red and blue are reciprocal images of light metamorphized into two equally balanced tones. Light plays the rôle of mediator; it prepares the mixed colors by blending them in neighboring bands, thus provoking complementary tones. In it and by it, extreme red combined with green — as blue combines with orange — disappears in the unity of white.

Color, then, is a particular phenomenon of reflection, which the reflecting body, penetrated by the light, appropriates and restores in an altered form. This form is the result of the ray's complete and ruthless

analysis and examination which will not be denied.

And the intensity of tones varies, following a gamut of which yellow is the keynote, according to the more or less complete response of matter to the solicitations of the light.

Who would not be shocked with the affirmation of the classic theory that the color of an object results from its absorption of all the colored rays except that one whose livery it seems to wear? On the contrary, I should think that color, which constitutes the visible individuality of each thing, is an original and authentic quality in it; and that the color of the rose is no less its property than the perfume.

That which we measure is not the rapidity of light, but simply the resistance that its surroundings oppose to it, while transforming it.

And visibility itself is only one of the properties of light; differing with different subjects.

HOURS IN THE GARDEN

THERE are people whose eyes alone are sensitive to light; and to them, for the most part, the sun is but a free lantern, by whose light every one carries on his especial work; the writer with his pen, the farmer with his ox. But I absorb the light with my eyes and ears, my mouth and nose, and all the pores of my skin. Like a fish, I float in it and I drink it in.

Just as they say the fires of morning and afternoon will ripen wine that is exposed in bottles, as though it were still the grapes on the vine; so the sunlight penetrates my blood and clears my brain. Rejoice in this tranquil and piercing hour! I am like seaweed in the current, moored only by a thread, its weight floating on the water, — or like the Australian palm; a tuft with great swaying leaves, high upon a tall trunk, — which last, flecked with the gold of evening, curl, wave, and uncurl with the outspread balance of wide and supple wings.

The formidable aloe sprang, undoubtedly, from one of the dragon's teeth that Cadmus

sowed over the Theban field. The sun drew this warrior from a ferocious soil. It has a heart of sword-blades, a flowering of glaucous thongs, belts, and straps. Sentinel of solitude, color of the sea and the sword, its artichoke bristles on all sides with enormous poniards. Persistently it upraises its harrows, rank after rank, until, having flowered, it dies; and from its heart springs a flower like a post, like a candelabra, like a standard driven into the final corpse!

By my order they have closed the door with bolt and bar. The porter sleeps in his corner, his head sunk on his breast; all the servants sleep. Only a pane of glass separates me from the garden; and the silence is so complete that, all the way to the walls of the enclosure, the mice between two floors, the lice in the breasts of the pigeons, the bubble of a dandelion on its fragile stem, must feel the noise in their midst as I open the door. The celestial spaces appear to me, with the sun just where I had imagined it, in the afternoon splendor. On high, a kite descends in wide circles through the blue; from the summit of a pine a cone falls. I am glad to be where I am. My walks in this enclosed place are distinguished by precaution and a taciturn and quiet vigilance,

— as a fisher fears to startle fish in the water if he so much as thinks. There is no trace here of that free and open country which distracts the mind and leads on the body. The trees and the flowers conspire to my captivity; and, as in a child's game the player must continually go back and begin again, so all the turns in this thick grass lead me to that furthest corner, where the wells are. Across the little hill, by means of a long cord, I shake the invisible pail. Like a ripening fruit, like a poet maturing his thought, I rest in the immobility all about me where life is measured only by the circling of the sun, by the beating of my pulse, — by the growth of my hair. Vainly the turtle-dove makes her pure and sad appeal, heard from afar. I will not stir from the house today. In vain the murmur of the great river reaches me.

At midnight, returning from a ball where, during many hours, I have watched human beings, — some in black, others in quainter draperies, — turning in couples (each figure expressing incomprehensible satisfaction) to the gymnastic modulations of a piano; at the moment when the porters who have reached the top of the stairway lift the curtain of my litter, I see in the light of my lantern, under the torrential rain, a

magnolia tree adorned with great ivory globes. Oh, fresh apparition! Oh, confirmation of imperishable treasure in the night!

The theme of the earth is expressed by the detonations of this distant drum, as one might hear a cooper in a cavernous cellar striking his casks with measured blows. The magnificence of the world is such that one anticipates at any moment having the silence shattered by the terrific explosion of a cry, the *taraba* of a trumpet, — the delirious exultation, the intoxicated elation of copper! The news goes about that the rivers have reversed their courses; and, charging the swollen streams, all the battering force of the sea descends upon the island continent, to trade there the produce of the horizon. The work of the fields benefits by this change; chain-pumps function and confabulate; and, as far as the inundated harvest-meadows, mingled with the somber prairie, mirror the guava-colored evening, all space is filled with an hydraulic murmur. A ragged tuft of pine crosses the circle of the moon. In another place, at this most shining hour, four lovers holding a sugar-cane, stamping on the golden wheels of a press, make a stream of blue and white milk flow like the water

of the sea through a very green field. And suddenly, against the blue, is thrust this young Bacchic face, inflamed with passion and with a superhuman gaiety, the eye sparkling and cynical, the lips twisted in mockery and invective! But the heavy blows of a hatchet in meat show me clearly enough where I am; and also the arms of this woman who, red to the elbows with blood dark as tobacco juice, drags out entrails from the depth of that great pearl-white carcass. A basin of iron, that some one turns over, flashes. In the rosy and golden light of Autumn, the whole bank of the canal is screened from my sight under pulleys which draw great blocks of ice, baskets of pigs, unwieldy bunches of bananas, streaming clusters of oysters, like pudding-stones, — and barrels of edible fishes so large that they are garnished and polished like porcelain. I have the energy still to notice these scales, where, with one foot placed on the platform, one fist clinging to the chain of bronze, they overturn the mighty heap of watermelons and pumpkins, and bundles of sugar-cane, tied with blossoming creepers from which spring tiny lip-colored flowers. And suddenly, lifting my chin, I find myself seated on a step of the stairway, my hand in the fur of my cat.

THE BRAIN

THE brain is an organ. The student will acquire a solid principle if he grasps this idea firmly: that the nervous organism is homogeneous in its center and in its ramifications, and that its function is simply such as its mechanical efficiency determines. Nothing justifies the excessive belief which imputes to the "white" or "gray" matter (accessory to sensory and motor activity) the function of secreting the intelligence and the will, as the liver does bile. A confusion in terms seems to imply it. The brain is an organ, like the stomach and the heart; and, just as the digestive or circulatory systems have their precise function, the nervous system has its own, which is the production of sensation and movement.

I use the word "production" designedly. It would be inexact to see in the nerves simply threads bound together, agents inert in themselves, of a double transmission; "afferent" (as they say) here; "efferent" there; ready indifferently to telegraph a noise, a shock, or an order of the inner mind. The apparatus assures the opening of a

cerebral wave, constant as a pulse, to all the body. Sensation is not a passive phenomenon; it is a special state of activity. I compare it to a vibrating cord, on which the note is formed by the correct position of the fingers. By sensation, I verify facts; by movement, I control action. But the vibration is constant.

And this view permits us to advance our investigation further. All vibration implies a source, as all circles have a center. The source of nerve vibration resides in the brain, which, separated from all the other organs, fills the entire cavity of the sealed skull.

The rule of analogy, at the outset, forbids seeing in it anything but the agent of reception, of transformation, and of digestion (so to speak) of the initial commotion. One can imagine that this duty has devolved especially on the peripheric matter which the white substratum forms, as an agency of amplification and of composition; and finally, that the complicated organs of the base of the brain are so many laboratories, setting the scene for distribution, arranging keyboards, installing the apparatus of substitution and of regulation.

We must now consider the vibration itself. By this I mean a double movement,

— one by which a body proceeds from a point to return to it. Here is the element we seek, — the symbol which constitutes essentially all life. The vibration of our brain is the agitation of the source of life, the emotion of matter in contact with that Divine Unity whose possession constitutes our typical personality.

This is the umbilical cord of our dependence. The nerves, and the contact that they give us with the exterior world, are but the instruments of our knowledge; and it is in this sense alone that they are the conditions of it. As one makes trial of a tool, so we fashion the education of our senses. We learn to know the world through its contact with our intimate identity.

The brain, then, is nothing but the organ of animal intelligence, sensitive only in the animals, intelligent in man. But, since it is merely a particular organ, it cannot be the support of the mind, nor of the soul. We could not do this discourtesy to any part of our body, which is the active and living image of God. The human soul is that by which the human body is what it is, — its act, its continually operating seed, and (as the Schools would say) its form.

LEAVING THE LAND

THE sea has come to seek us. She pulls at our cable, she draws the side of our boat away from the gangway. With a great quiver, it increases little by little the distance that separates it from the encumbered wharf and the port of seething life. And we follow the heavy tranquil water in its lazy windings. Here is one of the mouths by which the earth disgorges, spewing its thick muddy waters forth to mingle with the tangled grasses of the sea. Of the soil where we once dwelt, there remains only its crude color, ready to liquefy. And, right before us, a fire low down in the limpid air indicates the horizon and the desert.

While we are eating, I feel that the boat has stopped. Through its body, and through my own, there is freer breathing. The pilot is disembarking. Under the electric light on his dancing canoe, he salutes us with a wave of the hand. They cast off the ladder, and we depart. We depart in the light of the moon!

And I see the curved line of the horizon before me, like the frontier of immeasurable slumber. All my heart despairs, with the thick sob one utters falling asleep, as the shore recedes behind us and fades out of sight. Ah, Sea, it is thou! I re-enter. There is no bosom so sweet as Eternity, and no security comparable to uncircumscribed Space. Our news hereafter will be that each evening will bring us the moon, rising on our left. I am delivered from change and from diversity. Here there are no vicissitudes but those of day and night; no solicitation but the sky's before our eyes, and no repose but the bosom of these great waters which reflect it.

Cleansing purity! Here we may be absolved in the Absolute. What matter now the fermentation of people, the intrigues of marriages and wars, the operation of gold and of economic forces, and all the confused scheme of things below? Everything is simplified to the immediate act, according to the multifold passion of men and of things. Here I possess the central rhythm in its essence: the alternating rising and setting of the sun, and a simple fact; the appearance of the constellations on the horizon at an appointed hour.

And all day long I study the sea as one

studies the eyes of a woman who understands. I follow its reflection with the attentiveness of one who listens. In comparison with this pure mirror, how fare the gross intricacies of your tragedies and your ostentations?

1900 — 1905

OF this sense of expectation through all the universe (and of my regret still to be alive) one is the sign and the other the expression. One is Duration itself, and the other — suddenly sonorous — marks a moment. One measures silence, the other probes obscurity. One solicits me and the other fascinates me. Oh sentinel, oh bitter patience, — double vigilance! While one flames, the other apportions.

The night takes away our witnesses, we no longer know where we are. Lines and tints, our personal arrangement of the world all around us (whose center we carry about with us, according to the angle from which our eye gazes at the moment), these are no longer present to show us our position. We are reduced to ourselves. Our vision has no longer the visible for limit, but the invisible for its cell. Homogeneous, close, impassive, compact, in the bosom of this obscurity the lamp is clear and definite. It appears full of life, it contains its own oil. By virtue of its flame it is able to drink itself. It attests that of which all the

abyss is the absence. As it has taken a sufficient supply in the evening, it will last until rosy light is in the sky, until the dispersing of vapors like the fumes of new wine. It has a golden provision to last till dawn. As for me, let me not die in the night! Let me endure until the day! Let me not be extinguished except in light!

But if the night closes our eyes, it is in order that we may listen the more. Not only with the ears, but with the hearing of our soul — breathing as fishes do. Something accumulates, in the darkness: a number that must be sounded. I hear the bell, like the necessity for speech, like our inner silence summarized, like the Word speaking in secret. During the day we hear a whirlpool of ceaseless words weaving through the activities of human beings. The night extinguishes them, and only the measuring of Time remains. (I see, I listen). What does this clock apportion? What is measured? What strikes? What is Time? Here, to betray it, is the artifice of hourglass and clepsydra; the snare of a clock forces the hour to declare itself. I see it; the duration of time is reported to me; I am ruled by this march of time and of all the hours. I have my escape, I contain the creative pulse; outside of me the blow

which suddenly resounds declares all the hidden effort of my heart, the motor and the worker in my body.

Just as the navigator follows the coast of a continent, verifying all the lights one after another; so, midway between horizons, the astronomer standing on the moving earth, like a mariner on his bridge, calculates the exact hour with his eyes on the most complete sextant of all. The enormous scheme of things, the innumerable universe is reduced to the establishing of these proportions, to the elaboration of these distances! There is no trembling of the stars that does not influence our emotions, no design woven by the harmony of the planets in which we may not be involved. There is no star revealed by the microscope on the photographic plate to which I may be indifferent. The hour strikes, and by its act the immense sky seems to lighten. Between the pendulum buried in the heart of a sick-room and the flaming angel which successively reaches in the sky all the points prescribed by its circular flight, there is an exact response. I shall not compute another hour; I shall not face it with less decision for all that.

THE DELIVERANCE OF AMATERASU

NO mortal man can, without incongruity, honor the moon by a public devotion. She is the computer and the fabricator of our months, the spinner of a thread avariciously measured. In the clear light of day we rejoice to see everything in harmony, beautiful like an ample, multicolored fabric. But as soon as the night is come, I find the fatal shuttle weaving again across the web of the sky. My friend, may thine eye alone avow it, glamoured by its evil light, — and those five fingernails which shine on the handle of thy lute! But the sun, always pure and young, always the same, — intensely radiant, intensely white, — does it abate each day the flowering of its glory, the generosity of its face? And who can look at it without being forced to laugh also? With a laugh as free, then, as when you gather up a pretty little child, give your heart to the good sun! Why, in the most shallow waters, in the narrowest puddle left at the turning of the public road, it will find something to mirror its

ruddy face; and shall the secret soul of Man alone remain so sealed that it refuses such an image, and shows in the depth of its shadows no touch of gold?

Scarcely had the shabby race of sons of the soil commenced to dabble in the mud of the nourishing earth than, pressed by the furious desire to eat, they forgot the splendid sun, the eternal epiphany in which they were permitted to live. As the engraver, applying himself to cut his block according to the grain of the wood, occupies himself but little with the lamp above his head, which lights him; just so the farmer, reducing his whole view to that of his two hands and the black back of his buffalo, caring only to plow his furrows straight, forgot the luminous heart of the universe. Then Amaterasu was indignant in the sun. She is the soul of the sun by which it shines, and she is the breath in its sounding trumpet. "When the beasts," she said, "have filled their bellies, they love me, they rejoice with simplicity in my caresses; they sleep in the warmth of my glance, lulled by the regular beating of their blood within their bodies, the inner rhythm of their crimson life; but Man, brutal and impious, is never sated with eating. All day long the flowers adore me, and nourish their

devout hearts in the splendor of my face. Only Man is badly set on his stem. He deprives me of the sacred mirror in him that was made for my reflection. Let us fly, then, let us hide this beauty that is not honored!" Like a dove which slips into a hole in a wall, she descended into a deep cavern at the mouth of the river Yokigawa and, with an enormous rock, hermetically sealed the enclosure.

It grew dark — not the ordinary blackness of night, but the very darkness there was before the world was made. Crude and atrocious blackness filled the living earth. There was a strange vacancy in the sky; space had lost its center, the person of the sun had vanished like some one who disappears, like a judge who leaves his court. Then these ingrates knew the beauty of Amaterasu. How they searched in the drear air! A great sigh ran through all the islands, — the agony of penitence, the abomination of fear. As in the evening the mosquitoes in myriads fill the stagnant air, the earth was delivered to the brigandage of demons, and of the dead whom one could recognize by this sign: that they had no navels. As a pilot covers his nearest lights, the better to see into the distance; so, by the suppression of this central lamp,

space widened around them. And, from a part of the horizon unseen before, they saw a strange whiteness beyond the sky, like the frontier of a neighboring world: the reflection of another sun.

Then all the gods and goddesses, the familiar spirits of the earth, which assist Man and are his companions like horses and oxen, — all were moved by the miserable cries of the hairless creatures, like the barking of little dogs; and they all assembled at the mouth of the river Yokigawa, spirits both of the sea and of the air, — like herds of buffalo, like schools of herring, like flocks of starlings. There the virgin Amaterasu was hidden in a cave in the earth, like a honeycomb in the hollow of a tree, like a treasure in a jug.

"A lamp is not extinguished except by a more brilliant light," they said. "Amaterasu is there! We do not see her, but we know that she has not left us. Her glory has not suffered diminution. She is hidden in the earth like a cricket, like an ascetic in the retreat of his own thoughts. How shall we make her come out? What appeal can we make to her, and what can we offer her that will be as beautiful as she?"

Then from a stone fallen from heaven they made a mirror, very pure, completely

round. They tore down a pine-tree and swathed it in garments of gold and scarlet, like a doll. They adorned it like a woman, and they put the mirror upon it for a face. And they placed this sacred *gohei* exactly in front of the cavern, which contained the indignant soul of light.

What voice could they choose powerful enough to pierce the earth, to say, "Amaterasu, I am here! I am here, and I know that you are here also! Show yourself to me, oh vision of my eyes! Oh Life, come out of the sepulcher!" The familiar voice, the first voice that she hears when she passes the horizon of human life: the cock calling from the farms on every side at the first crimson streak of dawn, — his is the cry of light itself, the trumpet that no obscurity can stifle! Night or day, indifferent to the visible presence of his goddess or to her withdrawal, indefatigably he carries on his fanfare, with precision he articulates his faith. So before the buried Amaterasu they led the great white bird. And he crowed. And, having crowed, he crowed again.

Then, as if they could not fail to respond to his summons, all the noises of life awoke: the murmur of the day; active, interminable speech; the sound of thousands

thronging the hours; the vibrating word whose rhythm is meted out by the bonze with his mallet of wood in the depth of his temple. All these sounded at once, — all the gods, responding to their names. They were very timid, very faint. However Amaterasu in the earth heard them, and was astonished.

And here one must insert the image of Uzumé, just as, in the little popular books, her picture interrupts the black shower of letters. She had invented all this, the dear goddess. She had concocted this wonderful strategy. And now she danced intrepidly on the stretched skin of her drum, frantic with hope; and all that she could find to lure out the sun was a poor little song invented for children: *Hito futa miyo . . . .*

Hito futa miyo
Itsu muyu nana
Yokokono tari
Momochi yorodzu,

as one might say: *One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand!* — and as if one said also: *All of you, look at the door! Her Majesty has appeared. Hurrah! Our hearts are filled with happiness.*

Then in the fury of the dance she untied her belt, she threw it impatiently aside; and, with draperies flowing, laughing and crying, she stamped and bounded on the elastic and resonant skin which she struck sharply with her feet. And, when they saw her robust and buxom form like that of a little girl, relief came into the hearts of all and they began to laugh. *The sun is no longer in the sky, and still there are not lamentations, but laughter?* Amaterasu heard them, and her heart was filled with chagrin. Unable to conquer her curiosity, she softly opened the door of the cavern: "*Why are you laughing?*"

A great ray swept across the assembled gods; it leaped the border of the earth; it illumined the moon in the empty sky. Suddenly the Day-Star flamed in the lifeless heavens. As an overripe fruit bursts, behold! — the blind earth could no longer contain the jealous eye, the burning fire of curiosity placed in its center, the woman who is the sun! "Why are you laughing?" — "Oh Amaterasu!" said Uzumé.

And all the gods in unison cried, "Oh Amaterasu!" prostrating themselves.

"Oh Amaterasu, you were not with us; you thought you had withdrawn your face from us; but look, here is some one more

beautiful than you are! *Look!*" she said, showing the *gobei*, showing the sacred mirror which, concentrating the flame, produced an insupportable brilliance. "*Look!*"

She saw; and, jealous, raptured, astonished, fascinated, she took one step out of the cavern; and instantly the night was gone!

All the great worlds, that turn about the sun as an eagle circles his prey, were astonished to see the day shining in such an unaccustomed place and the little earth all devoured with glory, like a chandelier which disappears in its own light.

She took one step out of the cavern, and immediately the strongest of the gods leaped forward to close the door behind her. Before her image, surrounded by seven rainbows, — adorable spirit, living fire, from which, with the divine face, emerged only two hands, two pink feet, and the curls of her hair, — so young, so formidable stood this brilliant and essential soul! And, like the swallow which lifts itself in larger and larger circles above the sparkling fields, so Amaterasu, reconquered by her own image, mounted toward her celestial throne. And Time began again with its first day!

At the doorway of the Shinto temples,

by means of a cord of straw, the earth still guards against the disappearance of its light; and, in the last recess of the bare sanctuary, they hide, instead of the Eleusinian fire, a little round mirror of polished metal.

A VISIT

THERE are long cries before any one opens, — furious batterings upon the patient portal, — before the servant, grown conscious of this "concert," comes to recognize the stranger deposited on a litter in the midst of his porters, before the door. For here there is no deep-sounding bell, no button which, by the pulling of a wire attached through the walls to secret mechanism, sets off a sudden explosion, like the squeal of a beast that one pinches. The Black Mountain is the quarter where the old families live, and the silence is profound. The space that Europeans would reserve for recreation and games, the Chinese consecrate to retreat. In this animal honeycomb, between these streets seething with an unclean humanity, they reserve wide unused spaces, — empty enclosures that are the inheritance of some distinguished person, and that cloister his household gods. Only a noble roof can possess the enormous shade of these banyans older than the city, and of these vines which droop under the weight of their purple globes.

I have entered. I am waiting all alone in the little parlor. It is four o'clock, and the rain has ceased, — or is it still raining? The earth has received its fill of water; the soaked leaves breathe freely. As for me, under this somber and friendly sky I know the compunction and peace which one feels after having wept. Facing me is a wall with an uneven coping, where three square windows open, each crossed with porcelain bars imitating bamboo. As they adjust a "grille" over diplomatic papers, which isolates the important words, so they have applied this screen of triple openings to the wide countryside of trees and water, and have reduced it to a single theme repeated as in a triptych. The frame defines the picture; the bars, which let my sight pass, exclude me, and, better than a closed and bolted door, make certain that I remain inside.

My host does not arrive. I am alone.

THE RICE

IT is our very teeth that we sink in the earth, in this plow that we plant there; and even now our bread eats there as we shall eat. At home, in the cold north, it is the sun who kneads our bread; he ripens the field as the open fire cooks our pancakes and roasts our meat. With a strong plowshare we open a furrow in the solid earth where that crust of bread is formed which we cut with our knife and grind between our teeth.

But here the sun does not serve only to heat the domestic sky like a furnace full of coals. One must take precautions with it. When the year commences, the waters overflow. These vast fields without slopes, scarcely separated from the sea that they continue, that the rain soaks without ever draining away, take refuge under the sheet of water in which the peasants fix a thousand rice-frames. The work of the village is to enrich the mud by means of many buckets; on all fours the farmer strokes the mud and dilutes it with his hands. The Mongol does not nibble bread, he

snatches it with his lips, he gulps it down, without fashioning a semi-liquid aliment of it in his mouth. So the rice grows, as it is cooked, in steam; and the intention of its people is to furnish all the water it will need to sustain the heat of the celestial furnace. Also, when the waters rise, the chain-pumps sing like crickets everywhere; and they do not have recourse to the buffalo. Side by side, clinging to the same bar and pressing the red handle with knees in unison, men and women watch the kitchen of their field as a housewife watches a smoking dinner. And the Annamite carries the water in a sort of spoon; in his black soutane, with his little tortoise head, as yellow as mustard, he is the weary sacristan of the mire. How many reverences and genuflections there are when, with a bucket fastened to two cords, the pair of *nhaques* go seeking in all the hollows for juicy mud with which to anoint the earth and make it good to eat.

THE PERIOD

I STOP. There is a period to my walk as to a phrase that is finished. It is the title of a tomb at my feet, at this turning where the road descends. From there I take my last view of the earth. I survey the country of the dead. With its groups of pines and olive trees, it spreads out between the deep fields that enclose it. Everywhere there is consummate plenty: Ceres has embraced Persephone. Inescapably this marks the ultimate. I recognize at the foot of these unchangeable mountains the wide line of the river. I define our frontier, I accept it. My exile is symbolized by this island crowded with the dead, devoured by its harvests. Standing alone amid a buried people, my feet among the names spoken by the grass, I watch this cleft in the mountains, through which the soft wind, like a growling dog, has tried for two days to force the enormous cloud it has drawn from the waters behind me.

It is done; the day is completely gone. There is nothing left but to return, trav-

ersing again the road that leads me to the house. At this halt, where rest the carriers of coffins and buckets, I look behind me for a long time at the yellow road where the living fare with the dead, which ends like a red period upon the crowded sky.

THE TOAST TO A FUTURE DAY

I HAVE climbed to the highest point of the mountain to drink a toast to a future day, — to a new day, to one that will come, — perhaps it will succeed this very night. *To the highest point of the mountain, in this cup of ice that it lifts to the very lips of Aurora!* I have stripped and rushed into it. It is so full that, when I enter, the water overflows like a cataract. I dance in the ebullition of the source like a grape-seed in a glass of champagne. I cannot distinguish this gushing basin in which I splash from the whirlpool of air separated from me by a narrow brink. Far below me circles the clamorous eagle. Beautiful Aurora, like a shaft thou art sped here from the sea below among the islands! Drink! that I may feel the quivering of thy insatiate lip as deep as the submerged plants to which I sink. Let the sun rise! that I may see the light shadow of my suspended body painted beneath me on the sand of this basin ringed with the seven-colored rainbow.

THE DAY OF THE FEAST OF ALL THE RIVERS

ON this day of the feast of all the rivers we are going to salute our own, which is wide and rapid. It is the outlet of the country, it is the force enclosed in her sides, it is the liquefaction of the substance of the earth, it is the outpouring of the water hidden in the most secret of her folds, of milk under the impulsion of the ocean which suckles her. Here, under the good old granite bridge; between the boats from the mountain which bring us minerals and sugar, and, on the other side, the many-colored junks of the sea, which from their anchorage direct toward the impassive piles their great patient eyes, like those of beasts of burden; the river pours out through sixty arches. What an uproar, what a white foam it makes, when Aurora sounds her trumpet, — when the Evening recedes, to the beating of drums. Here are no piers like those dreary egresses of the Occident. On a level with the river, in a domestic familiarity, each one comes to wash linen, to draw the water for supper. And, in

the Springtime, in the turbulence of his joy, this dragon with undulant coils invades our streets and our houses. He effaces with one lick of his tongue the accumulated filth of the village.

But today is the feast of the river. We celebrate carnival with it, in the rolling tumult of yellow waters. If you cannot pass the day in a backwater, sunk to the eyes like a buffalo in the shade of your boat, at least do not neglect to offer to the sun of noon pure water in a bowl of white porcelain. For the coming year it will be a certain remedy against colic. And this is not the time to be avaricious. One may unseal the heaviest jug, drink from a golden bowl or earthenware vessel, one may drink from the very neck of the bottle the tea of the Fourth Month! Let every one, on this afternoon of flood-tide and full sunlight, come to feel, to stroke, to clasp, to ride this great municipal water-beast, which flees with endless coils toward the sea.

Moving throughout its length, trembling from bank to bank with sampans and with boats; where the guests, clothed in silk like vivid bouquets, drink and enjoy themselves; all is light and the sound of drums. From here, from there, from everywhere, pirogues with dragons' heads appear and

defile, propelled by the arms of an hundred naked paddlers, who move to the delirious rhythm of this large yellow man in the midst, as with both hands he beats out a demoniac march. How close together they seem, — in one wave, the very spirit of the current! How active this crowd of bodies, plunged to the waist! On the bank where I embark a woman is washing her linen. The bowl of vermilion lacquer into which piles the clothing has a border of gold that shines and glows in the sun of this festival. Brute glance of reflected brightness; symbolic eye of this day of the honorable River!

THE GOLDEN HOUR

OF all the year this is the most golden hour! As the farmer at the end of the season realizes the fruits of his labors and receives their price, so the season comes in a gold to which all is transmuted, in the sky and on the earth. I wander through the lanes of the harvest, up to the neck in gold; I rest my chin on the table of the field which flashes in the sunlight to its farthest boundary. Going toward the mountains, I surmount a sea of grain. Between the banks of harvest, the immense, dry flame of the morning-colored plain, where is the old dim earth? Water is changed into wine; oranges gleam in the silent branches. All is ripe; grain and straw, and the fruit with the leaf. It is indeed golden. All is finished, and I see that all is true. In the fervent effort of the year all color has evaporated. Suddenly, to my eyes, the earth is like a sun. Let me not die before the golden hour!

DISSOLUTION

AGAIN I am carried back over the indifferent liquid sea. When I am dead, nothing can hurt me. When I shall be interred between my father and mother, nothing will make me suffer more. They cannot jeer any longer at this too ardent heart. The sacrament of my body will dissolve in the interior of the earth; but, like a most piercing cry, my soul will repose in the bosom of Abraham. Now everything is dissolved, and with a dull and heavy eye I search about me in vain for the familiar land and the firm road under my feet, — and for that unkind face! The sky is nothing but fog, and Space is nothing but water! You see it! Everything is blurred; and all about me I must search in vain for line or form. For a horizon there is nothing but the cessation of color in darkness. All matter is resolved into water alone, like the tears I feel coursing down my cheeks. All sound is like the murmur of sleep when it breathes to us all that is

most crushing to our hopes. I shall have searched in vain, I shall find nothing more beyond me — neither that country which might have been my home, nor that well-loved face!

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